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The Message of Wheaton '83 Conference to the Churches

We, the participants in the Wheaton '83 Conference, greet you, our brothers and sisters all over the world, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. More than 300 of us from 60 countries gathered at this Conference about "the nature and mission of the church," convened by the World Evangelical Fellowship, sponsored by many churches and agencies, and meeting in June 1983 in Wheaton, Illinois, U.S.A. For two weeks, under the general theme of our Lord's Word, "I will build my church," we have been working together in three simultaneous consultations dealing with:

**The Church in its Local Setting;
The Church in New Frontiers for Missions;
The Church in Response to Human Need.**

We were very diverse in our background, coming from rich and poor nations, speaking different languages, having different cultures and histories and with great disparity in incomes and lifestyles. We came from churches representing a variety of forms, structures and practices. All were concerned about the urgent need for a biblical and incarnated theology of the church and to proclaim the Gospel to every people. We invite you to join us in our effort to study the nature and mission of the church which our Lord Jesus Christ Himself is building.

I. THE CHURCH IN ITS LOCAL SETTING

The Church as the Kingdom Community

Some may wonder why it is necessary to have an international conference to discuss the nature and mission of the church. Are not the historic creeds and confessions enough?

Certainly the creeds and confessions affirm with great precision the unity, the holiness, the universality and the apostolic nature of the church. Yet it is also true that we live in two dimensions at the same time. We possess a joyous oneness in Christ which transcends all restrictions known to mankind but we also live in the painful reality of a visible church regrettably divided by both doctrine and practice.

And so, we have sought to discover afresh what it means in our time to affirm that the church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. We have understood and now reaffirm that the church is the community of Christ's saving rule, made up of those who bear and confess the name of Christ. His Kingdom community manifests itself locally and visibly in a variety of assemblies, large and small, gathered by God's Word and marked by Christ's ordinances. These local assemblies minister to God in worship, to their members in nurture, and to the world in witness and service. [p. 9](#)

The Life and Work of Local Churches

We acknowledge that these local assemblies are shaped by Christ Himself receiving both life and form from His Spirit. And we know the Spirit provides everything needed for their life and work, and that the Spirit transforms their members into the likeness of Christ. We know that the Lord who has so richly endowed the church charges us to holiness and godliness, as together we eagerly await the consummation of all things in

and through our Lord Jesus Christ from whom and for whom all things exist. ([2 Peter 3:11, 13](#); [Colossians 1:16, 17](#)).

We have also searched the Scriptures and shared our insights in order to clarify our claim to be apostolic. We praise God that Christ's church is built upon the teachings of the apostles and prophets who received the Word of God and ministered it to us ([Ephesians 2:20](#)). Moreover, our churches are apostolic not only because they rest on that foundation but also on account of their mission. We therefore unequivocally affirm that the command of Christ to His apostles in [Matthew 28:19, 20](#) is totally binding upon us all.

The Witness of Suffering and Free Churches

We recognize with sober concern that some churches are being called by Christ to fulfill their apostolic mission amidst forces fiercely hostile towards both them and their Lord. We all thank God for their faithful witness, and pledge ourselves to support them and pray for them.

Dear brothers and sisters, we have been humbled to reflect that if some of our number can accept suffering for Christ and His Kingdom those of us who enjoy the freedom to serve Christ openly should break out of our complacency and redeem the time. Ought we not to shun the temptation to compromise and to be conformed to this world? Ought we not to repent of our self-indulgence and indifference? We cannot afford to forget that we should be a prophetic voice in the world today, preparing the way for the Lord's return!

Leadership Training in the Churches

We have also considered leadership in the church. We praise the Lord Jesus that He still raises up those whom He endows and equips to build up His church ([Ephesians 4:11–16](#)). We must be alert to identify the gifts of the Spirit in men and women, and encourage them to carry the touch of testimony in the power of the Holy Spirit. We may be able in part to do this by formal training but we must recognize that informal learning through active service and discipling is always necessary for the formation of leaders. [p. 12](#) about life after death. Our mission is far more comprehensive. God calls us to proclaim Christ to the lost and to reach out to people in the name of Christ with compassion and concern for justice and equity ([Rom. 10:14, 15](#); [Ps. 82:2–4](#); [Mic. 6:8](#)).

The Transforming Presence of the Kingdom

We have reminded each other and we remind you that in the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ, the Kingdom of God has come to us ([Lk. 11:20](#)). We confess that the Kingdom is still to come in its fulness at our Lord's return and we live in joyful expectation of that day. Yet we also affirm that He has already given us His Spirit as first-fruit of the glorious future and as guarantee of what is still to come ([Rom. 8:32](#); [Eph. 1:14](#)).

The reality of the presence of the Kingdom gives us the courage to begin here and now to erect signs of the coming Kingdom by working prayerfully and consistently for more justice and peace and towards the transformation of individuals and societies. Since one day God will wipe away all tears, it grieves us to see people suffer *now*; since one day there will be perfect peace, we are called to be peace makers *now*; since one day we will enjoy full salvation, we have to oppose deprivation and injustice *now*. We humbly yet urgently call upon you to stand with us in this ministry of practising love, seeking to restore the dignity of human beings created in the image of God.

A Two-Fold Accountability

We gratefully acknowledge the fact that many churches and Christian agencies are involved in the work of relief, of justice, and of transforming communities. We rejoice in what is being done through the far-flung and diverse activities of such Christian groups and individuals. Still, as children of the same Father, we recognise that we are to be accountable not only to those who support our ministries but also to those to whom we minister including the local churches. We are thus challenged to become more sensitive to each others' needs as we together seek to glorify God. We should recognise that we are never only givers; we are also receivers, and we rejoice in the many and varied gifts we have been privileged to receive from one another.

The Stewardship of God's Resources

We have come to the awareness that we may joyfully affirm our various cultures as God's gifts to us. It has, however, become clear to us that these very cultures are infected with evil and may indeed lure us into conforming to the world. We have been challenged to let God's Spirit **p. 13** purify our cultures, so that they may be ennobled and transformed.

We have become deeply aware of the fact that we have nothing we can really call our own. Everything belongs to our Lord, and we are to be His faithful stewards. We are therefore challenged to care for His creation. This means, among other things, that many of us should live more simply in order that others, including unborn generations, may simply live. We humbly confess that we have often acted as though the earth's resources and what we call our possessions are for us to use and squander at will, not realising our dependence upon and responsibility to others.

An Invitation to Partnership

Finally, brothers and sisters, we confess our utter dependence upon God. He sends *us* into the world, but the mission remains *His*. It is He who enlists us—the Kingdom community—in His agenda for the world. To this end, He has given us His Spirit, to enlighten us and be our Counsellor, to impart His many gifts on us, and to equip us for our ministry. We move forward—trembling yet confidently—and we invite you to move with us, as we prepare for that day when Christ will return and every knee will bow before Him and every tongue confess Him as Lord of all.

PRAISE HIS NAME!

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A STUDY GUIDE FOR THE LETTER TO THE CHURCHES

These questions are for use preferably in small groups in churches, homes, offices and institutions. Attempt to relate the Biblical teachings to your own situation. Do not attempt to study more than one or two questions in each session.

I. THE CHURCH IN ITS LOCAL SETTING

1. What steps can a local church take to overcome divisions in doctrine and in behaviour among its members and become more like God's ideal Church? [Acts 15:1–35](#); [1 Cor. 1:10–17](#); [Eph. 4:1–6](#), [Eph. 5:15–21](#), [P. 14](#)

2. How does a local church understand itself as Christ's Kingdom community as seen through its worship, through the nurture of its members and its witness and service in the world? [Matt. 16:18–19](#); [1 Thess. 2:10–12](#).

3. How does the Holy Spirit transform us and our church community into the likeness of Christ? [Rom. 12:1–2](#); [II Cor. 3:17–18](#); [Gal. 5:22–26](#).

4. What does it mean for a church to be apostolic in its nature and its mission? [Acts 2:42](#); [Eph. 2:19–22](#); [Eph. 3:5](#).

5. How can churches in free situations support churches called to suffer for their faith? [Matt. 5:44](#); [Rom. 1:9–10](#); [Eph. 5:15–17](#); [1 Peter 2:19–25](#).

6. How can your church take a more active role in recognizing spiritual gifts and in the leadership training of its members? [Rom. 12:1–8](#); [Eph. 4:11–16](#).

7. Discuss how para-church agencies can more responsibly supplement the work of local churches and how frictions and tensions between them can be overcome. [Acts 6:1–6](#); [1 Cor 3:5–15](#); [1 Cor. 12:5–11](#).

II. THE CHURCH IN NEW FRONTIERS FOR MISSIONS

1. How does a local church fulfil its calling to be Christ's agent in His mission in the world? [Matt. 28:18–20](#); [Luke 4:18–20](#).

2. List and discuss the strategies for the church and mission agencies to take the gospel to the three thousand million unreached people in the world to-day. [Isaiah 49:6](#); [Matt. 9:35–38](#); [Rom. 10:14–15](#); [II Cor. 10:16](#); [Eph. 2:11–13](#).

3. What does it mean for a local church to be both a gathering and a sending community? [Acts 11:19–26](#); [Acts 13:1–3](#); [Acts 14:27–28](#).

4. Describe how churches can cross new frontiers at home and abroad and create their own sending agencies to help them achieve this goal. [Acts 8:4–8](#); [Acts 10:1–48](#); [Acts 16:6–10](#).

5. Share what you know about the training programmes for missionaries working in your own country and overseas. What is the role of the church in this training? [Matt. 10:1–31](#); [Luke 10:1–17](#).

6. How can churches and mission agencies more effectively share their resources of people, materials, finance, and communication skills for the building up of the body of Christ? [Ps. 24:1](#), [Acts 11:27–30](#); [II Cor. 8:1–15](#); [1 Tim. 6:11–21](#).

III. THE CHURCH IN RESPONSE TO HUMAN NEED

1. What is the relationship between preaching the Gospel or helping [P. 15](#) the poor and oppressed? [Matt. 22:34–40](#); [Mark 16:15–18](#); [Luke 4:18–19](#); [Luke 10:25–37](#).

2. In the light of our expectation of the return of Christ, how should we live now? [Matt. 24:36–51](#); [1 Thess. 5:1–24](#); [Rev. 22:12–17](#).

3. What is our part, if any, in erecting signs of Christ's coming Kingdom of peace and justice? [Micah 6:8](#); [Matt. 5:1–16](#); [I Cor. 15:58](#).

4. What does it mean in practice to be accountable to both those who support our work and to the local church, and those whom we serve? [Gen. 4:37–44](#); [Luke 16:1–13](#); [Acts 14:26–28](#).

5. Give examples of how God judges and purifies our culture. [Rom. 12:2](#); [1 Cor. 9:19–23](#); [James 1:16–17](#).

6. How can a simpler lifestyle contribute to a more responsible stewardship of God's creation? [Deut. 15:7–11](#); [Acts 4:32–37](#); [Phil. 2:1–4](#).

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Function or Office? A Survey of the New Testament Evidence

Ronald Y. K. Fung

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Through careful exegesis of the New Testament the author rejects the views of a succession of modern scholars on the relationship between Charisma and Church order and argues for the harmony of relationship between spiritual gifts, function and specialized office. He also answers the question as to whether or not all charismata can be subsumed under ecclesiastical office.

(Editor)

A succession of scholars have seen the relation between spiritual gifts and ecclesiastical office, charisma and church order, basically in terms of separation, tension, or even opposition.¹ We must ask on the basis of the New Testament evidence whether such a position can be maintained and, if not, What the true relation is between function and charisma on the one hand, and office and order on the other.² 'Office' is here thought of

¹ Thus Adolf Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, trans. James Moffatt (2 vols; London: William & Norgate, 1908), 1.334ff., who distinguished between the universal 'charismatic' ministry of apostles, prophets, and teachers and the local 'administrative' ministry of bishops and deacons; R. Sohm, who regarded the organized structure of the Church as involving 'a departure from the pristine purity of the spiritual fellowship of saints' (W. D. Davies, *Christian Origins and Judaism* [London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1962] 202–203); Ernst Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes*, trans. W. J. Montague (London: SCM, 1964), 63–94, and J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (London: SCM, 1975) 345–350; *idem*, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1977) 351–359, both of whom regard the rise of the institutional ministry as a symptom of 'early Catholicism' (*Frühkatholizismus*).

² In an earlier article, 'Charismatic versus Organized Ministry? An Examination of an Alleged Antithesis', *EvQ* 52 (1980) 195–214, I have attempted a detailed critique of Käsemann's thesis, with particular reference to the Pauline corpus. I have avoided simply reproducing here what was said there, although some repetition will hopefully be excused as inevitable.

as a formally recognized position with appropriate duties, and 'function' as the discharge of a ministry without a formal position being involved.³ p. 17

I JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES⁴

It has been said in general that Jesus 'made little contribution to the establishment of an orderly pattern of life and ministry';⁵ certainly, he does not seem to have appointed any of his disciples to any permanent posts. Yet the very fact that he constituted twelve apostles ([Mark 3:14](#); [Luke 6:13](#))⁶ may indicate that even the early disciples of Jesus were not a mere haphazard band. T. W. Manson, describing the picture of the retinue of Jesus during his ministry as one of a series of concentric circles of people, has helpfully drawn attention to this evidence of 'degrees of intimacy and of responsible sharing in the work of the Ministry' even at this early stage.⁷ Nevertheless, it is clear that in the community of Jesus there is no distinction between priests and laity, nor is there any hierarchy among the disciples⁸—service being the sole principle of rule as well as the single criterion of greatness (e.g. [Mark 9:35](#)/[Luke 9:48](#); [Mark 10:43–44](#)/[Matt. 20:26–27](#)).

II THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM

Leadership of the Jerusalem church was originally in the hands of the twelve apostles, who had been designated by Jesus as judges of 'the twelve tribes of Israel' in the new age ([Matt. 19:28](#); [Luke 22:30](#)). The place left vacant by the defection of Judas having been filled by Matthias ([Acts 1:15–26](#)), the twelve feature prominently in the early chapters of Acts both as witnesses to Jesus' resurrection (e.g. [4:33](#); [5:30](#)) and as directors of the church's affairs (e.g. [4:34–37](#); [5:2](#); [6:1–6](#); [9:27](#)) as well as supervisors of evangelistic work beyond its confines (e.g. [8:14](#)), with Peter assuming the leadership as *primus inter pares* [P. 18](#) ([2:37](#); [5:3](#); [29](#); [8:14](#)).⁹ Paul's statements in [Galatians 1:17](#), [19](#) are in accord with the picture of Acts and thus indirectly bears witness to its accuracy. At the time, however, of his second post-conversion visit to Jerusalem ([Gal. 2:1–10](#)), probably

³ Cf. the distinction between German *Amt* and *Dienst* as defined by Eduard Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament*, trans. Frank Clarke (SBT 32; London: SCM, 1963), 8(= Preface).

⁴ Ernst Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today*, trans. W. J. Montague (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 252, claims that Jesus 'did not find any organizationally apprehensible and clearly defined communities', and Dunn, *Unity and Diversity* 106, has advocated the use of the word 'movement' instead of 'community' to describe the circles round Jesus. For a defense of 'the community idea in the teaching of Jesus' see Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1981) 706–710; cf. Davies, *Christian Origins* 206–207.

⁵ G. W. Bromiley, *ISBER* 1 (1979) 695a.

⁶ The genuineness of this tradition is defended by Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries*, trans. J. A. Baker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), 14. On Luke's unique Claim that Jesus himself used the name 'apostles' of the twelve, cf. I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (NIGTC; Exeter: Paternoster, 1978) 238–239.

⁷ T. W. Manson, *The Church's Ministry* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1948) 47–48.

⁸ Schweizer, *Church Order* 31–32 (=21); Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority* 28–29.

⁹ The leadership of the twelve in the affairs of the Jerusalem church is doubted by scholars who do not take the historicity of Acts seriously: see, e.g., Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority* 14–15; Schweizer, *Church Order* 28 (=21), 48–49 (=3n), 70 (= 5i); Dunn, *Unity and Diversity* 107.

identical with the famine-relief visit of [Acts 11:30](#) (=[12:25](#)),¹⁰ James, the brother of the Lord (cf. [1 Cor. 15:7](#)), appears as the number one 'pillar' of the church ([Gal. 2:9](#)), the implied transfer of leadership from Peter to James being probably attributable to Peter's imprisonment under Herod Agrippa I and his subsequent engagement in missionary work outside Palestine ([Acts 12:1-17](#)). By the time of the Jerusalem conference James had emerged as the undisputed leader of the Jerusalem church ([Acts 15:13-21](#)), a position which he maintained up to the time of Paul's fateful visit to Jerusalem ([Acts 21:18](#)) and beyond. But in the case of neither James nor Peter before him is there any suggestion of his being the first 'bishop' of Jerusalem; nor did they or the other apostles find successors to follow in their steps.¹¹ Indeed, such an attempt was inherently impossible, for 'directly implicit in [the] once-for-all character of their function is the fact that the rank and authority of the apostolate are restricted to the first "apostolic" generation and can be neither continued or renewed once this has come to an end'.¹²

Closely associated with the apostles were the Christian elders who first appear in connection with the collection from Antioch ([Acts 11:30](#)), subsequently as a group alongside, and sharing in policymaking with, the apostles ([Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22-23; 16:4](#)), and finally in close conjunction with James ([Acts 21:18](#)), who now appears as 'president, or *primus inter pares*, of the elders of the Jerusalem church'.¹³ The Christian elders probably arose by analogy with the elders (*zeqenîm*) of Judaism, and this suggests that the term is to be p. 19 regarded as an official title and not merely indicative of function.¹⁴ No indication is given as to the mode of their appointment (apostolic designation or popular choice?); they simply, so to speak, suddenly appear in [Acts 11:30](#).

The case is different with the seven appointed to assist the apostles by taking over the responsibility of the daily distribution to widows ([Acts 6:1-6](#)). While they appear in the present passage as almoners, they may have been regarded as leaders of the Hellenistic group within the church:¹⁵ subsequently Stephen is to play an important role as the first Christian apologist and martyr ([Acts 7](#)), while Philip is to be instrumental in carrying the gospel to Samaria ([8:4-13](#)) and to the Gentile eunuch of Ethiopia ([8:26-39](#)), finally settling down at Caesarea ([8:40; 21:8](#)). The number seven may rest on analogy with the Jewish synagogue;¹⁶ chosen by the members of the church, they were probably

¹⁰ I have offered a defence of this identification in 'The Epistle to the Galatians (10)', *The Harvester* 62/10 (October 1983); and, at greater length, in 'Excursus II: The Visit of [Galatians 2:1-10](#) and the Date of the Letter', 'The Relationship between Righteousness and Faith in the Thought of Paul' (University of Manchester dissertation, 1975; Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, #80-28, 242), 1.575-604 (esp. 575-593). with corresponding notes in 2.580-596 (esp. 580-593).

¹¹ Cf. Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority* 19, 20 (contrast, however, 77). See also G. S. M. Walker/R. T. Beckwith, *IBD* 1.200a-b.

¹² Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority* 23.

¹³ F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (rev. ed.; London: Oliphants, 1971) 352.

¹⁴ Cf. Guthrie, *Theology* 740 n. 129; Fung, 'Charismatic versus Organized Ministry?' 198:199. By far the most common view of their model is the synagogue of Judaism; so, besides those mentioned in Fung, *ibid.* 199 n. 11: Schweizer, *Church Order* 200 (= 24i); G. W. Bromiley, *ISBER* 1 (1979) 517a; G. S. M. Walker, *IBD* 1.287c; R. A. Bodey, *ZPEB* 4.239b.; James Monroe Barnett, *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order* (New York: Seabury, 1981) 34.

¹⁵ F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) 131.

¹⁶ Schweizer, *Church Order* 71 (= 5h); K. Hess, *NIDNTT* 3 (1978) 545. Bo Reicke, 'The Constitution of the Primitive Church in the Light of Jewish Documents', in *The Scrolls and the New Testament*, ed. K. Stendahl (New York: Harper, 1957), 143-156 (145), suggests that the apostles formed a 'college' and the seven

appointed to their task by the apostles (cf. v.3b, ὁ υἱς καταστήδομεν)¹⁷ with laying on of hands and prayer—thus ‘instituted in their office by the highest authority in the Church’.¹⁸ There is a general consensus of opinion that the passage should not be taken as describing the origin of the diaconate;¹⁹ the appointment of the p. 20 seven was rather a singular measure designed to meet a specific emergency.²⁰

Even so, it was a highly significant moment in the development of the ministry in the early church, for a number of reasons. (1) It is ‘a typical example of how the Church may be guided by the Holy Spirit in the formation of new institutions’, in this case ‘the creation of a new office with appropriate functions’ to which suitable persons were elected.²¹ (2) It was also significant ‘as the first example of that delegation of administrative and social responsibilities to those of appropriate character and gifts, which was to become typical of the Gentile churches, and the recognition of such duties as part of the ministry of Christ’.²² (3) What is most relevant for our immediate purposes, it illustrates the perfect manner in which charisma, office (order) and function (ministry) are interrelated: seven men of appropriate *gifts* (v.3) are appointed to their *office* (of almoner) (vv.3b, 6) for the *ministry* (v.2, διακονεῖν) of serving tables. The priority, however, manifestly rests with the charismatic qualifications of the men and an abiding principle is thereby forcefully illustrated: ‘Since the apostolic Church required satisfactory evidence that a person was filled by the Holy Spirit before entrusting him with the most ordinary service (6:3), one may assume that candidates for official ministerial orders were chosen from among those persons in whom the Spirit’s gifts were most evident’.²³

Hellenists ‘themselves probably formed another college, in the fashion of the septemvirate of the Jewish synagogue’; similarly, Edward Schillebeeckx, *Ministry. A Case for Change*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM, 1981), 144 n. 4.

¹⁷ On this see R. P. C. Hanson, *The Acts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967) 91–92; Everett F. Harrison, *Acts: The Expanding Church* (Chicago: Moody, 1975) 106–107; I. Howard Marshall, *Acts* (TNTC; Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1980) 127.

¹⁸ E. Lohse, *TDNT* 9 (1974) 433. On the other hand Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* 181, thinks that their election ‘was a recognition of charismatic authority more than institution to an office’; cf. *idem*, *Unity and Diversity* 107. But ‘recognition’ and ‘institution’ are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

¹⁹ T. M. Lindsay, *ISBE* 3.2059a; H. W. Beyer, *TDNT* 2 (1964) 90; C. Brown, *NIDNTT* 3 (1978) 1067; P. H. Menoud, *IDB* 1.623; J. Stam, *ZPEB* 1.49a; A. F. Walls, *IBD* 1.371a; Leon Morris, *Ministers of God* (London: IVF 1964) 82–86; Hans Küng, *The Church*, trans. Ray Ockenden and Rosaleen Ockenden (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1967), 400–401; Leonhard Goppelt, *Apostolic and Post-Apostolic Times*, trans. Robert A. Guelich (Grand Rapids: Baker, n.d.), 188; Barnett, *The Diaconate* 30 (note the reference to the article by Andre Lemaire in n.28 on p.39). The opposite view is held by e.g. D. G. Stewart, *ZPEB* .618b.

²⁰ Schweizer, *Church Order* 74 (=5m); however, he arbitrarily considers the seven’s subordination to the apostles unhistorical (49–30; 70–71 =5i). Marshall, *Acts* 204, suggests that by the time of Paul’s famine-relief visit ([Acts 11:30](#)) the seven ‘had ... become known as “elders” by analogy with the name given to leaders in Jewish synagogues’; it seems preferable to say that ‘presumably their task was taken over by the elders ([11:30](#)) after the Hellenists were driven out in the coming persecution ([8:1](#))’ (Harrison, *Acts* 107).

²¹ Hans von Campenhausen, *Tradition and Life in the Church*, trans. A. V. Littledale (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 131.

²² A. F. Walls, *IBD* 1.371b.

²³ R. A. Bodey, *ZPEB* 4.237b. To what extent one may speak of ‘candidates for official ministerial orders’ in relation to the New Testament is, of course, part of the subject of our inquiry.

There were also prophets in the Jerusalem church, three being mentioned by name: Agabus ([Acts 11:28; 21:10](#)), Judas and Silas ([15:32](#)). They do not, however, appear to have played any part in the administration of the church. [p. 21](#)

III THE PAULINE COMMUNITIES

We know nothing about the church at Tarsus where Paul spent his 'silent years' (cf. [Acts 9:30; 11:25–26](#)). But in the Antioch church, he is mentioned as a teacher among a number of 'prophets and teachers';²⁴ other unspecified workers (teachers and preachers?) are mentioned in [Acts 15:35](#), so that clearly the leadership of the Antioch church was in the hands of prophets and teachers as a corporate body ([Acts 13:1–3](#)). This is sometimes taken as representative of the structure of the ministry in the churches of the Hellenistic mission, and providing at least a partial basis for rejecting the statement in [Acts 14:23](#) as historically inaccurate²⁵—the other factor adduced to justify that rejection being the complete absence of the term 'elder' in the undisputed letters of Paul.²⁶ It is quite unnecessary, however, thus to cast doubts on Luke's narrative here, for the following reasons. (1) Given that Barnabas—who had invited Paul to be his fellow-worker in the church at Antioch and apparently remained Paul's senior colleague during the initial stage of the missionary journey which they took together (note the order of their names in [Acts 11:30; 12:25; 13:1–2, 7](#))—came from Jerusalem, 'there is every reason to suppose that he brought the presbyteral model from Jerusalem to Asia Minor'²⁷ and (one might add) to Syrian Antioch before that. (2) 'It is in the highest degree likely, since this was the only method of organizing a community of which he had direct experience, that he would instinctively have established boards of elders wherever he founded a congregation, in Gentile just as much as in Jewish regions'.²⁸ (3) The fact that Paul does not mention elders (except in the Pastorals) need not imply conflict with Luke's account, [P. 22](#) and the more general terms which Paul does use elsewhere 'could well be intended to denote elders'.²⁹ (4) It is conceivable that the title 'elder' 'caught on more rapidly where there was a predominantly Jewish element in the congregation, for it was reminiscent of the LXX'³⁰—as is apparently borne out by the fact that the title is used in connection with those churches which 'started from an ex-Jewish

²⁴ Some take the expression as referring to one group: e.g. Schweizer, *Church Order* 183 (= 22c); Kevin Giles, 'New Testament Patterns of Ministry', *Interchange* 31 (1983) 43–60 (56 n. 49). However, the double use of τε suggests that two classes of men are in view—three prophets and two teachers: so G. Friedrich, *TDNT* 6 (1968) 849 n. 426; Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* 171–172.

²⁵ E.g. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity* 108; Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority* 70.

²⁶ Dunn, *Unity and Diversity* 355; *idem*, *Jesus and the Spirit* 182; Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, trans. R. McL. Wilson *et al.* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971), 436; Schweizer, *Church Order* 71 (= 5i) n. 271; 216 (= 26e).

²⁷ Schillebeeckx, *Ministry* 15.

²⁸ J. N. D. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles* (BNTC; London: A. & C. Black, 1972) 123. Cf. Guthrie, *Theology* 761 n. 196, citing in support William Neil, *Acts* (NCB; London: Oliphants, 1973) 166.

Kelly (op. cit. 15) also rejects the view which takes Luke to be adapting his terminology to the current practice of his day—a view espoused e.g. by Hanson, *Acts* 152, and Marshall, *Acts* 241—for 'brushing aside what looks like eye-witness testimony' (the other reason he mentions does not apply to the two authors just named).

²⁹ Harrison, *Acts* 225. Cf. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles* 15.

³⁰ Kelly (as in n. 28 above).

nucleus' (Jerusalem, Lycania, Ephesus, Crete)³¹ but not in Philippi, where the Jewish synagogue presumably did not even exist and the church from the very start was entirely composed of Gentile elements ([Acts 16:13–15, 33](#)). It has been suggested that 'Luke mentions the appointment of elders or presbyters here as typical of Paul's method which he adopted wherever he founded a Christian community',³² and it is not unreasonable to assume that Paul pursued the same plan wherever necessary and possible.³³ Acceptance of the basic historicity of [Acts 14:23](#) is bound to have its influence on our interpretation of the evidence in the Pauline letters (taken below in their probable chronological sequence).

In [Galatians 6:6](#) ὁ κατηχῶν, specifically singled out as deserving of pay, most probably refers to a form of full-time or almost full-time ministry supported by the congregation.³⁴ A definite, specialized ministry is also suggested by τοὺς κοπιῶντας ... καὶ προϊσταμένους καὶ vonθετοῦντας of [1 Thessalonians 5:12](#), to whom Paul asks the community to render respect 'on account of their work' (v.13).³⁵ In [p. 23](#) choosing this threefold designation Paul is obviously more concerned about the function than the office, but this in itself does not invalidate the conclusion that a recognized group of church leaders is in view here; with or without dependence on the statement in [Acts 14:23](#), some scholars have identified these leaders as probably 'elders',³⁶ although others have argued that they are not to be taken in any official sense at all.³⁷ Paul's exhortation in [1 Corinthians 16:15–16](#) suggests that while church workers are in view³⁸ they are not church officials, since they owed no appointment to apostle or church but were self-appointed (ἔταξαν ἑαυ τούς)—although ultimately, of course, their

³¹ J. N. D. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude* (BNTC; London: A. & C. Black, 1969) 197. In this connection we may note the following passages in [13:43, 44–45](#) (Antioch); [14:1, 2](#) (Iconium); [16:1, 3](#) (Lystra); [19:10, 17](#) (Ephesus). No information is given about the formation of the Cretan church; but the fact that in the Pastorals it, like the church at Ephesus, appears threatened by 'a Gnosticising form of Jewish Christianity' (Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles* 12; cf. [Tit. 1:10, 14; 3:9](#)) may point to its having a strong Jewish element within its ranks.

³² C. S. C. Williams, *The Acts of the Apostles* (BNTC; London: A. & C. Black, 1971) 174.

³³ Cf. F. J. A. Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia* (London: Macmillan, 1908) 98 (cf. 66); A. M. Farrer, 'The Ministry in the New Testament', in *The Apostolic Ministry*, ed. K. E. Kirk (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1946) 113–182 (144); E. J. Moeller, 'Concerning the Ministry of the Church', *CTM* 22 (1951) 385–416 (398).

³⁴ Cf., in addition to those mentioned in Fung, 'Charismatic versus Organized Ministry?' 197 n. 2: H. N. Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia*, trans. Henry Zylstra (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 216–217; Davies, *Christian Origins* 244; E. Earle Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 10 with nn. 33,34.

³⁵ This position is strongly maintained by Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic* 7 with n. 24, 11–12. Schillebeeckx, *Ministry* 8, cites this verse as 'historical evidence' for his view that when the first 'missionary apostles moved on, their functions of leadership and coordination' were 'taken over by obvious and spontaneous leaders in the various communities'.

³⁶ (With reference to [Acts 14:23](#)) Guthrie, *Theology* 761; A. L. Moore, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (NCB; London: Nelson, 1969) 80; D. E. H. Whiteley, *Thessalonians* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969) 81; (without reference to [Acts 14:23](#)) James Denney, *The Expositor's Bible* 4.349b; William Neil, *The Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians* (MNTC; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1950) 122; I. Howard Marshall, *1 and 2 Thessalonians* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans / London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1983) 147.

³⁷ E.g. James Moffatt, *EGT* 4.41a; Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* 286–287, 291 (where he goes so far as to say, 'the word "office" is best avoided completely in any description of the Pauline concept of ministry').

³⁸ Cf. Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic* 7–8.

appointment was from God. The rest of the letter bears out the conclusion that there were no church officers in Corinth.³⁹ This, however, is probably an exception and should not be regarded as exemplifying a general pattern; as Leonhard Goppelt observes, 'I Corinthians in no way represents an authoritative ideal of the Pauline constitution, but corresponds to the strong pneumatic movement found during the initial period in Corinth and more generally to a transitory stage in the Pauline constitution'.⁴⁰

In *Romans 16:1* the term διάκονος, used of Phoebe of the church at Cenchreae, is probably a designation of office,⁴¹ thus making p. 24 Phoebe a deacon (or some other sort of 'minister') of the church.⁴² Similarly, the διάκονια which Archippus is to be solemnly charged to execute fully (*Colossians 4:17*) probably denotes some recognized, official ministry in the church at Colossae.⁴³ Epaphras (*Col. 1:7*; cf. *4:12*), too, appears as an evangelist of the Lycus Valley,⁴⁴ and the emphasis of the passage appears to lie in the fact that Epaphras was Paul's authorized representative in Colossae and hence a

³⁹ A contrary opinion is expressed by Adolf Schlatter, *Gottes Gerechtigkeit: Ein Kommentar zum Römerbrief* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1965) 396, who deduced the existence of deacons and bishops in Corinth (and Rome) from the fact that there was a deaconess in the church at Cenchreae.

⁴⁰ Goppelt, *Apostolic Times* 187. Similarly, F. F. Bruce, *Paul and His Converts* (London: Lutterworth/New York and Nashville: Abingdon, 1962) 60; *idem*, ZPEB 1.971b; Guthrie, *Theology* 767. On the Corinthian situation cf. our previous discussions in 'Charismatic versus Organized Ministry?' 200–203; 'Spiritual Gifts or Organized Ministry? (1) The New Testament Evidence', *The Harvester* 60/4 (April 1981) 28–29.

⁴¹ To the authorities cited in Fung, 'Charismatic versus Organized Ministry?' 197 n. 4 the following may be added in support: Schweizer, *Church Order* 199 (=24g); Leon Morris, 'The Ministry of Women', in *Women and the Ministries of Christ*, ed. Roberta Hestenes and Lois Curley (Pasadena: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1979), 14–25 (15); G. G. Blum, 'The Office of Woman in the New Testament', in *Why Not? Priesthood and the Ministry of Women*, ed. Michael Bruce and G. E. Duffield, revised and augmented by R. T. Beckwith (Appleford, Abingdon: Marcham Manor, 1976), 63–77 (64–65); R. T. Beckwith, 'Recent New Testament Study', in *Why Not?* 148–152 (151—but cf. G. S. M. Walker/R. T. Beckwith, *IBD* 2.1007a). Opposed to this view are C. C. Ryrie, *The Role of Women in the Church* (Chicago: Moody, 1980) 88–89; George W. Knight, III, *The New Testament Teaching on the Role Relationship of Men and Women* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977) 51; Robin Scroggs, 'Paul and the Eschatological Woman', *JAAR* 40 (1972) 283–303 (294 n. 34); P. Hünermann, 'Conclusions Regarding the Female Diaconate', *TS* 36 (1975) 325–333 (325–326); Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* 288; J. Stam, ZPEB 1.49a; W. A. Heidel/G. W. Bromiley, *ISBER* 1 (1979) 880a.

⁴² G. Stählin, *TDNT* 9 (1974) 464 n. 231, notes that the word διάκονισσα (deaconess) did not occur till well after New Testament times; C. Brown, *NIDNTT* 3 (1978) 1065, states: 'Paul's use of the masc. term *diakonos* not only suggests the existence of an order of women deacons but also that the women were included in the same order as male deacons'.

⁴³ Cf. H. W. Beyer, *TDNT* 2 (1964) 88; G. Delling, *TDNT* 4 (1967) 13; *idem*, *TDNT* 6 (1968) 297. While there is no way of ascertaining the exact nature of this ministry, Paul's personal encouragement to Archippus is most probably to be interpreted against the local situation at Colossae: the reference could then be to the assumption of pastoral responsibility formerly held by Epaphras (Everett F. Harrison, *Colossians: Christ All-Sufficient* [Chicago: Moody, 1971] 119–120; Ralph P. Martin, *Colossians and Philemon* [NCB, London: Olibphants, 1974] 139–140) or on relation to the house community of Philemon and Apphia (Schillebeeckx, *Ministry* 10).

⁴⁴ F. F. Bruce, in *Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians*, by E. K. Simpson and F. F. Bruce (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 182; G. Friedrich, *TDNT* 2 (1964) 737.

preacher of the authentic gospel.⁴⁵ Thus both Archippus and Epaphras may be regarded as examples of a specialized ministry.⁴⁶

In *Ephesians*, Paul does not expressly mention any church officials; the charismata of [4:11](#) refer to functions and not offices.⁴⁷ This, [p. 25](#) however, again (as with [1 Thess. 5:12](#)) does not preclude the possibility that there were church officers in the communities being addressed;⁴⁸ that there were in fact elders in the Ephesian church is attested by [Acts 20:17, 28](#), where πρεσβύτεροι and ἐπίσκοποι appear as clearly synonymous. It is exaggerating the situation to regard this equation of terms as an anachronistic ‘early Catholic tidying up of the initial rather diverse forms into the more uniform pattern of later decades (cf. 1 Clem. 42:4);⁴⁹ all it need imply is that there was in apostolic times a sufficient fluidity about titles of church officials for the identification of πρεσβύτερος and ἐπίσκοπος (also in [Titus 1:5](#), 7) to be perfectly natural and not in the least anachronistic.⁵⁰ On this showing, different titles may have been assumed by the same church leaders: ‘elder’ conjuring up the notion of office or status, ‘overseer/bishop’ bringing to the fore the idea of function,⁵¹ as does also the implied title of ποιμένες ([Acts 20:28](#)), which links up significantly with the ποιμένες of [Ephesians 4:11](#). Of even greater significance is the fact that the appointment of these presbyter-bishops are directly attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit, which may mean, ‘either that their possession of charismatic gifts marked them out for their ministry, or that they had been designated

⁴⁵ Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, trans. William R. Poehlmann and Robert J. Karris (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 22a, b, 23a; Donald Guthrie, *NBCR* 1142b. Both the sense of the verse and the weight of superior witnesses favour the view that in [Colossians 1:7b](#) ἡμῶν should be read for ὑμῶν (διάκονος); C. F. D. Moule, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians and to Philemon* (CGTC; Cambridge: the University Press, 1968) 27 n. 1; Lohse, *Colossians* 23a; Martin, *Colossians and Philemon* 49; Harrison, *Colossians* 25; Bruce, *Colossians* 179 n. 7.

⁴⁶ Cf. our previous discussion in ‘Charismatic versus Organized Ministry?’ 197–198.

⁴⁷ Some think that the reference is to office-holders in the Church: e.g. Rudolf Schnackenburg, ‘Christus, Geist und Gemeinde (Eph. 4:1–16)’, in *Christ and the Spirit in the New Testament* (C. F. D. Moule FS), ed. Barnabas Lindars and Stephen S. Smalley (Cambridge: the University Press, 1973), 279–296 (292, 295). Others see a double reference—to offices as well as gifts: T. K. Abbott, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1968) 117; Markus Barth, *Ephesians* (AB, 2 vols; Garden City: Doubleday, 1974) 2.435. But the immediately following context places the emphasis on the idea of harmonious functioning among the members of Christ’s body, thus showing that the gifted men just enumerated (as themselves gifts of the ascended Lord to his Church) are viewed as exercising functions rather than holding offices.

⁴⁸ Cf. Barth, *Ephesians* 2.436.

⁴⁹ Dunn, *Unity and Diversity* 355–356.

⁵⁰ Cf. Hanson, *Acts* 204. The common supposition that the equation of presbyters and bishops in *Acts* and in the *Pastorals* represents the fusion of two different church orders (the Jerusalem church with its elders and the Pauline churches with bishops)—so Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority* 77–78; Schweizer, *Church Order* 199 (=24g); G. Bornkamm, *TDNT* 6 (1968) 666; Goppelt, *Apostolic Times* 189; Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* 347—is challenged by Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles* 123–124, and by R. E. Brown, *Priest and Bishop: Biblical Reflections* (New York: Paulist, 1970) 65–69, as summarised in E. Margaret Howe, *Women and Church Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982) 74: ‘both the offices of presbyter and bishop may have originated within the ranks of the Jewish Christians’; ‘it is by chance that only the presbyters at Ephesus are referred to as bishops’; ‘it is equally likely that the Jerusalem presbyters were so designated but that this escaped mention in *Acts*’.

⁵¹ G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London: Duckworth, 1980) 82. Differently, H. E. Dosker, *ISBER* 1 (1979) 516b: ‘elder/presbyter’ signifies age and place in the church; ‘bishop’ refers to office.

for it by the [p. 26](#) testimony of prophets in the Ephesian congregation';⁵² although the latter interpretation could conceivably be supported by reference to the case of Timothy ([1 Tim. 1:18; 4:14](#)), yet the two cases are not identical, and in view of Paul's teaching on spiritual gifts in general and the particular correspondence between our passage and [Ephesians 4:11](#) (where the subject is spiritual gifts), the former interpretation is surely to be preferred.⁵³ This again (as in the case of [Acts 6:1–6](#)) illustrates the perfect blending of charisma, office and function: the elders/presbyters (*office*) were endowed by the Holy Spirit with the appropriate *gifts* for the discharge of their work as overseers/bishops and pastors/shepherds (*function*); here again, the sovereignty of the Spirit—and hence the possession of charisma—takes priority of place.⁵⁴

It is generally agreed that the ἐπίσκοποι and διάκονοι of [Philippians 1:1](#) designate the leaders of the Philippian church; but whether the terms denote functions only or offices also remains a matter of debate.⁵⁵ It is a noteworthy fact that 'in none of the other Pauline letters (apart from the Pastorals) do we find such special reference made to a definite body of people in the church exercising supervisory and administrative functions',⁵⁶ and considering the fact that *Philippians* is probably the latest of Paul's 'prison epistles' and in the Pastorals the same categories of people appear as definite officers, we may conclude, with Campenhausen, that 'we are dealing [p. 27](#) with established terms for offices, ... even though these are of a very general and neutral, and entirely non-sacral, origin and nature'.⁵⁷

⁵² G. W. H. Lampe, 'Grievous Wolves' (Acts 20:29), in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament* (as in n. 47 above), 253–268 (253).

⁵³ Cf. F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (London: Tyndale, 1965) 380: 'The church recognized as overseers those whom the Holy Spirit had qualified for the work by bestowing the appropriate χάρισμα upon them'.

⁵⁴ Cf. C. K. Barrett, 'Conversion and conformity: the freedom of the spirit and the institutional church', in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament* (as in n. 47 above), 359–381 (381): 'Not only the synoptics but Acts also sees the development of the church as controlled from point to point by the gift and direction of the Spirit, who remains sovereign, appointing, for example, those who are to act as presbyter-bishops ([Acts 20:28](#))'.

⁵⁵ E.g. Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic* 10 n. 32, considers the διάκονοι to be 'local ministers ... who served in an official, i.e. a recognized and designated capacity in the community'; Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* 288–289 (cf. *idem, Unity and Diversity* 113), insists that the terms represent only 'charismatic ministries ... recognized by the church and not offices ...'; while J. Stam, *ZPEB* 1.49a, regards their use as 'quasiofficial'. Cf. Eduard Lohse, 'Die Gemeinde und ihre Ordnung bei den Synoptikern und bei Paulus', in *Jesus und Paulus* (W. G. Kümmel *FS*), ed. E. E. Ellis and E. Grässer (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 189–200 (192), who thinks that they probably had to do with financial management and eucharistic celebration of the community, but were not yet fixed offices set off from the community.

⁵⁶ F. F. Bruce, 'St. Paul in Macedonia: 3. The Philippian Correspondence', *BJRULM* 63 (1980–81) 260–284 (283).

⁵⁷ Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority* 68. Barrett (as in n. 54 above) says that 'to explain them [sc. the two words in question] in terms of the usage of half a century later is methodologically false'; but this criticism loses its force if the Pastorals are genuinely Pauline letters (if only written through an amanuensis). The position reflected in Barrett's comment illustrates the need for 'evaluation of the effects of theories of pseudonymity on the exegesis of a text' (Donald Guthrie, 'Questions of Introduction', in *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, ed. I. Howard Marshall [Exeter: Paternoster, 1977], 105–116 [107]). Cf. our previous discussion in 'Charismatic versus Organized Ministry?' 198; to the references there cited (nn. 9, 10) may be added in support: F. W. Beare, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (BNTC; London: A. & C. Black, 1973) 48–49; J. J. Müller, *The Epistles of Paul to the Philippians and to Philemon* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 35 n. 8; J. H. Michael, *The Epistle of Paul to the*

In the *Pastoral Epistles* the local ministry shows a more advanced degree of organization than heretofore, with apostolic delegates exercising supreme authority and transmitting the authentic gospel, with bishop-presbyters engaged in preaching, pastoring, ruling and in their turn passing on the tradition, with deacons (both male and female) rendering service of a more practical and temporal sort, and with suitably qualified widows probably assisting the whole by providing ministries particularly adapted to the needs of women.⁵⁸ We have elsewhere examined—and rejected—Käsemann's claim that the ministry as presented in the *Pastorals* represents the very antithesis of Paul's outlook.⁵⁹ Here a few observations may be made by way of emphasis or supplementation.

(1) Timothy and Titus are apostolic delegates, not adumbrations or the first concrete examples of the monepiscopate in a line of 'apostolic succession':⁶⁰ Timothy's ordination 'does not yet bear the character of legal authorization', since the initiative rests with the Spirit ([1 Tim. 1:18](#); [4:14](#)), his ministry is to be based on his exemplary life and conduct ([1 Tim. 4:12–16](#); cf. [Tit. 2:7](#)), the emphasis is on the succession of sound *doctrine* ([2 Tim. 2:2](#)), and there is no mention of ordination or laying on of hands in the case of the 'faithful men'.⁶¹

(2) The priority of the Spirit cannot be over-emphasized: Spirit-inspired prophecy led to the choice and ordination of Timothy in the first place ([1 Tim. 1:18](#)); the Spirit imparted to him the charisma p. 28 needed for his task ([1 Tim. 4:14](#); [2 Tim. 1:6](#)); the Spirit is the one who will enable him to keep the tradition of sound doctrine ([2 Tim. 1:14](#)), just as he is the giver of the charisma of teaching—the aptitude to teach (διδακτικόν)—which is required both of Timothy and of all other servants of the Lord ([2 Tim. 2:24](#)), not least, the presbyter-bishop of the local church ([1 Tim. 3:2](#); [Tit. 1:9](#)). All this 'proves that the charisma is still taken seriously in the *Pastoral Letters*, and has not become simply an attenuated idea' and that 'the writer still knows ... that it is not the permission of an authority but the "event" of God's Spirit, that qualifies a person to serve'.⁶² Thus for the third time (cf. [Acts 6:1–6](#); [20:17](#), [28](#)) we see clearly illustrated the interrelation between office (e.g. ἐπίσκοπός, [1 Tim. 3:1](#)),⁶³ gift (v. [2](#), διδακτικόν), and

Philippians (MNTC; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1939) 6; Guthrie, *Theology* 761; R. A. Bodey, *ZPEB* 4.240a; Barnett, *The Diaconate* 31–33.

⁵⁸ For details cf. Fung, 'Spiritual Gifts or Organized Ministry?' (see n. 40 above), esp. 29, and, more fully, *idem*, 'Ministry, Community, and Spiritual Gifts' (ThM thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1971) 157–175.

⁵⁹ Fung, 'Charismatic versus Organized Ministry?' 206–209.

⁶⁰ Cf. G. W. Bromiley, *ISBER* 1 (1979) 695b. Pace Dunn, *Unity and Diversity* 352.

⁶¹ Schweizer, *Church Order* 83–85 (=6g).

⁶² Schweizer, *Church Order* 210 (=25e) (in the original statement, the subject of the verb 'proves' is 'I Tim. 1.18'; the phrase 'at least in theory' has been omitted in our quotation as being judged unnecessary); cf. *ibid.* 88 (=6k), where the significance of [1 Timothy 1:18](#) is again stressed. The author rightly points out (210) that the writer certainly does not think that God's Spirit can be acquired only through the laying on of hands, which is not mentioned in connection with the appointment of presbyter-bishops.

⁶³ The word seems to be used here 'to designate a defined office to which one could aspire' (L. Coenen, *NIDNTT* [1975] 192); cf. H. W. Beyer, *TDNT* 2 (1964) 608. On the other hand, Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles* 72, thinks that since the word 'does not necessarily refer to ecclesiastical office but can denote any kind of administration, this may possibly be a current proverb commending ambition for office in general'. In any case, the immediate mention of ἐπίσκοπον in verse 2 renders it likely that the office in view in verse 1 is that of the church official known as overseer/bishop.

function (v.1, ἔργον), with the Spirit taking priority of place in equipping an office-bearer with the appropriate charisma for his work.

(3) There is no doubt that the elders form a clearly defined group.⁶⁴ Valuable clues to their position in the church at Ephesus are provided by [1 Timothy 5:17](#), which shows that (i) their function is to exercise leadership (οἱ προεστῶτες) in the congregation,⁶⁵ (ii) a distinction is made between the body of elders who exercise this general leadership and the narrower group with more specific tasks, particular mention being made of those who labour in preaching and teaching;⁶⁶ [p. 29](#) (iii) in the case of some at least of the narrower group of elders, the exercise of their functions is taking up much of their time and energies which might otherwise have been gainfully employed, since Paul enjoins that they are to be given double honorarium⁶⁷—a situation easily reminiscent of the apostle's teaching in [Galatians 6:6](#).

(4) As in [Acts 20:17, 28](#), the terms 'elder' and 'overseer' seem to be used interchangeably in [Titus 1:5, 7](#). In both its occurrences ([1 Tim. 3:2](#); [Tit. 1:7](#)), however, ἐπίσκοπος occurs in the singular with the article prefixed. This is taken by Günther Bornkamm as one of two arguments against an equation of the titles—the other being 'the separate enumeration of qualifications': [Titus 1:5–6](#) referring to the qualifications for presbyters and [Titus 1:7–9](#), for the bishop.⁶⁸ But the singular is almost certainly to be taken as generic, like πρεσβυτέρω in [1 Timothy 5:1](#) and ἡ χήρα in [5:5](#),⁶⁹ as referring 'to the bishop as a type and not to the number of bishops in a given place';⁷⁰ as for the list of qualifications in [Titus 1:5–9](#), the conjunction γάρ at the beginning of verse [7](#) binds what follows closely with what precedes, so that only *one* list, not two, of qualifications is here

⁶⁴ Cf. Schweizer, *Church Order* 85 (=6h); G. Bornkamm, *TDNT* 6 (1968) 666; Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles* 122, where cogent reasons are given against understanding the πρεσβύτεροι as simply elderly men.

⁶⁵ 'That the rulers "who rule well" were to be differentiated from others who ruled less well ... is unlikely' (Schweizer, *Church Order* 86 [=6h] n. 333). On προΐστασθαι see B. Reicke, *TDNT* 6 (1968) 702 (=to lead, to care for); Ernest Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (BNTC; London: A. & C. Black, 1977) 225 (=to protect, care for).

⁶⁶ For this understanding of the distinction implied in the verse, cf. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles* 124; G. Bornkamm, *TDNT* 6 (1968) 667. Schweizer, *Church Order* 86 (=6h) n. 333, concludes from this verse that the requirement that the bishop be an apt teacher ([1 Tim. 3:2](#); [Tit. 1:9](#)) 'will be an ideal demand that is not fulfilled in every case'; but it would be nearer the truth to say that while all elders should be 'apt to teach' some have teaching as their special gift (F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions* [Exeter: Paternoster, 1972] 117)—and possibly full-time occupation. Some have seen in the verse a distinction between 'ruling' and 'teaching' elders—e.g. Walter Lock, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1966) 62; L. Coenen, *NIDNTT* 1 (1975) 199—but this view is opposed by J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963) 195 n. 3; R. A. Bodey, *ZPEB* 4.239b; D. G. Stewart, *ZPEB* 1.619a.

⁶⁷ The context ([1 Tim. 5:18](#)) 'lends unconditional support' to this interpretation of διπλῆς τιμῆς ἀξιούσθωσαν (G. Bornkamm, *TDNT* 6 [1968] 666–667), for 'if τιμῆς here is to be taken merely as "honour", the Deut. quotation is singularly lacking in point' (A. T. Hanson, *Studies in Paul's Technique and Theology* [London: SPCK, 1974] 165). Similarly: Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority* 113 n. 261; J. Schneider, *TDNT* 7 (1971) 176–177.

⁶⁸ Bornkamm, *TDNT* 6 (1968) 667. Cf. Goppelt, *Apostolic Times* 190.

⁶⁹ So Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles* 74 (cf. 13–14, 231–232); Martin Dibelius/Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, trans. Philip Buttolph and Adela Yarbro (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972) 56a with n. 41

⁷⁰ H. W. Beyer, *TDNT* 2 (1964) 617. Cf. Lohse, 'Die Gemeinde und ihre Ordnung' (see n. 55 above) 198.

given—namely, those for the presbyter-bishop.⁷¹ But if ‘elder’ and ‘bishop’ are interchangeable [p. 30](#) terms,⁷² and there was clearly a plurality of elders, then even in the Pastorals there is no trace of the emergence of the monarchical episcopate, the origins of which belong to a later period of church history.⁷³

(5) It needs to be emphasized, finally, that the organization of the ministry in the Pastorals is not so advanced that they must be placed outside Paul’s lifetime,⁷⁴ it provides slender support for the view [p. 31](#) which sees the rise of the institutional ministry in the Pastorals (and other New Testament literature) as a sign of ‘Early Catholicism’.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Schweizer, *Church Order* 85 (=6h), suggests that here ‘the writer inserted a traditional exhortation for a bishop’ (see also n. 322).

⁷² This view is widely held: e.g. Lightfoot, *Philippians* 95–99; Edwin Hatch, *The Organization of the Early Christian Churches* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1888) 39 with n. 31; J. A. Robinson, ‘The Christian Ministry in the Apostolic and Sub-Apostolic Periods’, in *Essays on the early History of the Church and the Ministry*, ed. H. B. Swete (London: Macmillan, 1918) 57–92 (84); B. H. Streeter, *The Primitive Church* (London: Macmillan, 1929) 77; Bruce, *Book of Acts* 415; G. B. Caird, *The Apostolic Age* (London: Duckworth, 1955) 151; John Knox, *The Early Church and the Coming Great Church* (New York: Abingdon, 1955) 120, 130; Morris, *Ministers of God* 72–74; Schillebeeckx, *Ministry* 15, 146 n. 15; H. W. Beyer, *TDNT* 2 (1964) 615–616; L. Coenen, *NIDNTT* 1 (1975) 191–192; C. Brown, *NIDNTT* 2 (1976) 563; D. G. Stewart, *ZPEB* 1.618b.

⁷³ Cf. L. Coenen, *NIDNTT* 1 (1975) 192; Ridderbos, *Paul* 457 n. 91. In support of a distinction, some have taken the appointment of elders in [Acts 14:23](#) and [Titus 1:5](#) to mean ‘to appoint to the episcopate’: thus M. R. Vincent, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1968) 49; L. M. A. Haughwout, ‘Steps in the Organization of the Early Church’, *ATR* 3 (1920) 31–50 (41–42). But the attempt must be judged far-fetched; to say the least, if this were the intended meaning the biblical authors could have easily made it unambiguously clear with an additional phrase—say, *εἰς / πρὸς τὴν ἐπισκοπήν*—or by supplying a second accusative (cf. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles* 122). Equally unacceptable is the ‘liturgical’ interpretation whereby the bishop is directly evolved from the *ἀρχισυνάγωγος*, whose function was almost entirely liturgical (so P. Hinchliff, ‘Origins of the Christian Ministry’, *CQR* 162 [1961] 415–423 [416–417]), so that while ‘all the bishops might be also accounted as elders, ... not all the elders were bishops, but only those who presided over the Eucharistic assemblies’ (M. H. Shepherd, Jr., *IDB* 2.74b); for the New Testament evidence regarding the function of bishops places scant emphasis on the liturgical aspect, if indeed this aspect comes into view at all (on the connection between ministry and eucharist see Schillebeeckx, *Ministry* 30); and while *προΐστασθαι* could include the idea of ‘presiding’, its primary meaning in the passages concerned can hardly be ‘presiding at the worship service/the eucharist’. More plausible are the views that the bishops were ‘executive officers ... chosen from the ranks’ of the presbyters (Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles* 232) and that the *ἐπίσκοπος* was ‘an elder who performed the special function of oversight’ (Guthrie, *Theology* 763), but even these do not completely tally with the fact that leadership and pastoral care are functions predicated both of the bishop (*προϊστάμενον, προστῆναι, ἐπιψελήσεται, 1 Tim. 3:4–5*) and of the elder (*προεστῶτες πρεσβύτεροι, 1 Tim. 5:17; πομαίνειν, Acts 20:28*). Thus, regarding the two terms as completely interchangeable in ‘a varying use of language’ (Ridderbos, *Paul* 457 n. 91) still seems the most satisfactory interpretation.

⁷⁴ Cf. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles* 14–16 (esp. 15); and our previous discussion, ‘Charismatic versus Organized Ministry?’ 209. Guthrie, *Theology* 764, even says that ‘the ministry in the Pastorals is no more advanced than that in the Philippian church’.

⁷⁵ Cf. I. Howard Marshall, ‘“Early Catholicism” in the New Testament,’ in *New Dimensions in New Testament Study*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker and Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 217–231 (esp. 227–228). Cf. also Leon Morris, ‘Luke and Early Catholicism’, *WJT* 35 (1973) 121–136, reprinted in *Studying the New Testament Today*, ed. John H. Skilton (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1976), 60–75 (esp. 67); Campenhausen, *Tradition and Life in the Church* (see n. 21 above) 126–127, where he speaks of the concept of ‘early catholicism’ as the product of ‘a certain unhistorical, highly suspicious, ultra Protestant Criticism’ (further, 134–135).

IV THE GENERAL EPISTLES

The teaching of *1 Peter 4:10–11* shows very close affinities with the Pauline concept of charisma. The variegated grace of God manifests itself in the many different charismata of the community,⁷⁶ whose members have received each his own gift, and they are to employ their gifts in loving (cf. v.8) service to one another as good stewards of that same grace. Verse 11 cites two examples of specialized tasks, which may be taken as ‘a shortened summary’⁷⁷ dividing the exercise of charismata into ministry of word and ministry deed (cf. *Acts 6:2*);⁷⁸ the word διακονεῖν here, as contrasted with λαλεῖν, would seem to be used in the narrower sense of service to the needy and suffering, in contradistinction to its use in verse 10, which is all-embracing.⁷⁹ The passage makes it abundantly clear that, as in Paul, the gift bestowed by God constitutes a call to ministry⁸⁰ (cf. *Rom. 12:6–8*), and that all ministry is grounded in, derived from, and supported by God’s power (v.11b).⁸¹ The fact that the verb λαλεῖν is used elsewhere with the connotation of teaching and preaching (e.g. *Acts 10:44*; *Rom. 7:1*; *2 Cor. 2:17*; *4:13*; *Phil. 1:14*) and the parallelism between εἴ τις λαλεῖ and έἴ τις διακονεῖ have led some interpreters to see in verse 11 a reference to church officials;⁸² if this is correct, we **P.32** have here yet another (besides *Acts* and the *Pastorals*) illustration of the interweaving of gift, task and office.

In any event, an ordered ministry is clearly envisaged in *1 Peter 5:1–4*, with a definite body of elders whose function is described in terms of ‘pastoral oversight’ (if ἐπισκοποῦντες in verse 2 is original) or ‘shepherding’ God’s flock committed to their charge (v.2, ποιμάνατε τὸ ... ποιμνιον; cf. *Acts 20:28*)⁸³ and who are warned against the possible abuse of authority (κατακυριεύοντες, v.3).⁸⁴ The prohibition against discharging their duties for the sake of shameful gain (αἰσχροκερδῶς, v.2) has been taken to suggest that the elders received stipends,⁸⁵ readily recalling *1 Timothy 5:17* (and *Galatians 6:6*); but probably it is to be explained as the temptation to turn their

⁷⁶ Cf. H. Seesemann, *TDNT* 6 (1966) 485, who notes that this is the only place in the New Testament where the word ποικίλος has theological importance.

⁷⁷ Schweizer, *Church Order* 111 (=9b) with n. 419. Cf. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity* 116.

⁷⁸ Cf. H. W. Beyer, *TDNT* 2 (1964) 86. On λόγια θεοῦ cf. G. Kittel, *TDNT* 4 (1967) 138–139.

⁷⁹ C. E. B. Cranfield, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; 2 vols; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975, 1979) 2.622 n. 3.

⁸⁰ Schweizer, *Church Order* 111 (=9b).

⁸¹ Cf. W. Grundmann, *TDNT* 3 (1965) 399; also R. Y. K. Fung, ‘The Nature of the Ministry according to Paul’, *EvQ* 54 (1982) 129–146 (138).

⁸² So Kelly, *Peter and Jude* 180–181; cf. O. Michel, *TDNT* 5 (1967) 151.

⁸³ In view of the difficulties mentioned by Kelly, *Peter and Jude* 202, τῶν κληρῶν (taken in the sense of the flock entrusted to a presbyter; cf. *Acts 17:4*, προσεκληρώθησαν) is surely to be understood of various local churches rather than particular parts of a church (the two are regarded as alternatives by Schweizer, *Church Order* 112 [=9b] n. 422); cf. G. Bornkamm, *TDNT* 6 (1968) 665 n. 89, who further suggests that the plural ‘is perhaps due to the encyclical character of the epistle’.

⁸⁴ Cf. Schweizer, *Church Order* 111 (=9b); Dunn, *Unity and Diversity* 116; Kelly, *Peter and Jude* 196; G. Bornkamm, *TDNT* 6 (1968) 665. Pace Guthrie, *Theology* 784, who thinks that in *1 Peter* the term ‘elder’ is used in the sense of ‘seniority in age’ only.

⁸⁵ So A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (6 vols; Nashville: Broadman, n.d.) 6.131.

trust, as those in charge of the community funds, into a means of personal gain.⁸⁶ Alongside the ‘charisma constitution’ of [4:10–11](#), then, is placed ‘the constitutional office of the elders’ here;⁸⁷ on the basis of the earlier passage, it is reasonable to assume that the elders would have received gifts for their office⁸⁸—thus confirming the evidence of, or at least providing firmer evidence than, [1 Peter 4:10–11](#) that gift, function and office can blend together in harmony.⁸⁹

In the *Epistle of James*, where the unique use of συναγωγή in the sense of the Christian assembly ([2:2](#), note ὑμῶν) alongside the common New Testament word for church (έκκλησία, [5:14](#)) reflects an early stage of church development,⁹⁰ we find mention of p. 33 ‘teachers’ ([3:1](#)) and ‘elders’ ([5:14–15](#)). The former passage suggests that there was a recognized group of teachers (among whom the author places himself, vv.1, 2) comparable to those in other early Christian communities (cf. [Acts 13:1](#); [1 Cor. 12:28–29](#); [Eph. 4:11](#)), and that unworthy candidates were eagerly going after the office without taking its responsibilities—and particularly the greater liability to the penal judgement which it involves—seriously.⁹¹ In the latter passage, the elders of the church—church-bearers rather than just senior men of the congregation (note τούς)⁹²—are envisaged as praying over a sick member who is then miraculously cured in response to the prayer of faith (cf. v.16b), i.e. prayer which proceeds from confident belief and does not doubt (cf. [1:6](#)).⁹³ This presupposes the early Christian experience of charismata and involves in particular the gifts of faith and of healing—or perhaps we should say the charisma of ‘healing intercession’.⁹⁴ It has been suggested that the elders here are clearly ‘regarded as endowed with the gift of efficacious prayer in virtue of their office’ and that ‘the bearer of the office has merely inherited what at first belonged exclusively to the pneumatics’;⁹⁵ but if τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους may be understood as a generalizing plural, it is unnecessary to suppose that each elder will have the particular gift of healing intercession *by virtue of his office*; it seems preferable to suppose that

⁸⁶ So Kelly, *Peter and Jude* 201. Cf. J. Jeremias, *TDNT* 6 (1968) 498 n. 124; G. Bornkamm, *TDNT* 6 (1968) 665.

⁸⁷ Goppelt, *Apostolic Times* 187.

⁸⁸ Cf. Ernest Best, *1 Peter* (NCB; London: Oliphants, 1971) 167; Schweizer, *Church Order* 216 (=26f) n. 846 (God’s gifts are presupposed in the appointment of elders).

⁸⁹ That 1 Peter reflects an earlier stage in the evolution of church government than that seen in the Pastorals is held by both Kelly, *Peter and Jude* 197, and Dunn, *Unity and Diversity* 116. But see also G. Bornkamm, *TDNT* 6 (1968) 666.

⁹⁰ So Guthrie, *Theology* 781; James B. Adamson, *The Epistle of James* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) 105, cf. 197. συναγωγή is taken in a Christian sense also by Martin Dibelius/Heinrich Greeven, *James*, trans. Michael A. Williams (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) 132b; W. Schrage, *TDNT* 7 (1971) 837–838, cf. 828.

⁹¹ Cf. Guthrie, *Theology* 782; Adamson, *James* 140; Dibelius/Greeven, *James* 183; also K. H. Rengstorf, *TDNT* 2 (1964) 152.

⁹² So, correctly, G. Bornkamm, *TDNT* 6 (1968) 664; H. Schlier, *TDNT* 1 (1964) 231; Dibelius/Greeven, *James* 252b–253a; Adamson, *James* 197; Joseph B. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. James* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1954) 169. *Pace* Guthrie, *Theology* 782.

⁹³ R. Bultmann, *TDNT* 6 (1968) 206 (with n. 244); Mayor, *James* 173.

⁹⁴ G. Bornkamm, *TDNT* 6 (1968) 664; cf. Dibelius/Greeven, *James* 254b.

⁹⁵ Respectively, Bornkamm (as in previous note) and Dibelius/Greeven, *James* 255a (cf. 254a, 253a).

those who possessed the charismata in the largest measure would be included in the body of elders, and the latter would, on notification of a case of sickness, consider whether it was a fit case for the exercise of the charisma and depute some of their number to pray for the sick person.⁹⁶ It is also noteworthy that this gift is not confined to the body of elders as their sole prerogative: verse 16 suggests that anyone with the gift of healing intercession [p. 34](#) could heal the sick by prayer.⁹⁷ Thus [James 5:14–15](#) not only illustrates (for the fifth time) the harmony between gift, function and office but also hints at another important principle, viz. that while charismata can and do find expression in office, not all charismata can be subsumed under the heading of ecclesiastical office; taken with verse 16, the passage also illustrates the distinction—to which we have drawn attention elsewhere⁹⁸—between the ‘specialized ministry’ (here the elders) and the ‘common service’ (whoever has the charisma).

The community in *Hebrews* is exhorted to remember their past leaders and imitate their faith ([13:7](#)), to render their present leaders due respect and obedience ([13:17](#)), and to greet them on the author’s behalf ([13:24](#)); thus a distinct group of church leaders is given special mention and prominence, perhaps with the intention of strengthening their authority, and a definite congregational order is developing.⁹⁹ It has even been suggested that ‘this high estimation of office implies transition to early Catholicism’.¹⁰⁰ However, the actual word used (*ἡγούμενοι*) is one which suggests authority rather than office,¹⁰¹ and obedience is urged not as due to an office as such, but to the pastoral ministry that the leaders are actually exercising, just as the ministry of teaching is based on spiritual maturity expressed in discernment ([5:14](#)).¹⁰² On the other hand, it would seem exaggerated to say that ordering of offices is completely abolished and that *Hebrews* combats the institutional church,¹⁰³ since the intense concentration of ministry in the final and perfect High Priest, Jesus Christ, is occasioned by the author’s apologetic aim to present the absolute superiority of the New Order to the Old and need not in itself preclude the existence of officials in the church. In view of the clear distinction between the leaders and the led, it might be best to regard [p. 35](#) the epistle as reflecting ‘a primitive form of church order’¹⁰⁴ without excluding the possibility that the *ἡγούμενοι* are the people elsewhere called bishops or presbyters.

⁹⁶ So Mayor, *James* 169. Cf. Dibelius/Greeven, *James* 253b: ‘... one can probably presuppose a certain patriarchalism which is inclined to bestow upon especially experienced members of the community the official rank as well’.

⁹⁷ Dibelius/Greeven, *James* 254b; Mayor, *James* 232–233. The latter suggests that ‘one reason why the elders, rather than others, were to be called in, may have been that they were better able to judge what was the will of the Spirit’.

⁹⁸ ‘The Nature of the Ministry according to Paul’ (see n. 81 above) 141.

⁹⁹ Cf. Johannes Schneider, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, trans. William A. Mueller (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 135; also H. Windisch, *TDNT* 1 (1964) 500–501, who notes that among all the greetings in the imperative form in the epistles ‘only here is prominence given to the leaders as compared with the whole community’.

¹⁰⁰ F. Büchsel, *TDNT* 2 (1964) 907.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Guthrie, *Theology* 780; Schweizer, *Church Order* 114, 115 (=10b).

¹⁰² Schweizer, *ibid.*; Dunn, *Unity and Diversity* 119.

¹⁰³ Schweizer, *Church Order* 115 (=10b), 116 (=10c); Dunn, *Unity and Diversity* 119–120, 121–122.

¹⁰⁴ H. W. Montefiore, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (BNTC; London: A. & C. Black, 1977) 242.

Finally, in the *Johannine Epistles*, as in the *Gospel of John*, there is no mention of special ministries, charismata or offices.¹⁰⁵ *Revelation*, likewise, makes no reference to any church officials: the elders who appear in the heavenly throne-room (e.g. 4:4; 5:5; 7:11; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4) are probably best understood as an exalted order of angelic beings, the celestial counterpart of the twenty-four priestly and twenty-four Levitical orders of [1 Chronicles 24:4–18](#) and [25:1–30](#);¹⁰⁶ the apostles appear ([21:14](#)) as the foundation-stones of the New Jerusalem and so belonging to the founding era of the church; the references to prophets ([10:7](#); [11:12](#); [18](#); [16:6](#); [18:20](#), [24](#); [22:6](#), [9](#)) in themselves shed little light on church order in the Apocalypse, but since ‘testimony’ is expected of the church in general ([12:17](#)) and testimony to Jesus is supremely the hallmark of ‘the spirit of prophecy’ ([19:10](#)),¹⁰⁷ in principle the whole church is understood as a community of prophets, even though some are specially called to seal their testimony and ‘prophecy’ with their blood ([6:9](#); [12:11](#)).¹⁰⁸ Insofar as this may be accepted as a determining factor, we may concur [p. 36](#) that the church as presented in *Revelation* ‘is guided spiritually and prophetically rather than according to fixed offices’.¹⁰⁹

V CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

On the basis of the evidence surveyed above, we may now draw the threads together in an attempt to answer the question which we set ourselves at the beginning, viz.: Is there any contradiction between charisma and church order, and what is the true relation between function, gift, and office?

(1) The existence of some kind of specialized ministry, or more specifically of church officers, is attested for the primitive church in Jerusalem, for all the Pauline churches with the sole exception of Corinth, and for some of the churches in the General Epistles (1 Peter, James).¹¹⁰ If a different picture obtains in the *Gospel* and *Epistles of John* and

¹⁰⁵ So Schweizer, *Church Order* 124 (=11i), 127 (=12c); Dunn, *Unity and Diversity*. 119. (Mention should be made, however, of certain ‘adumbrations of functions within the coming community’ noted by Guthrie, *Theology* 725–726). Schweizer (127=12c) further observes that in the *Gospel* and *Epistles of John* ‘office’ exists only among the Jews and in the case of Diotrephes ([3 John 9](#)), whom he takes to be something like a monarchical bishop (more confidently, Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority* 122). However, ‘it is not certain that Diotrephes was a bishop: he may only have been a successful ecclesiastical demagogue’ (T. W. Manson, *The Church’s Ministry* 61, quoted in C. W. Dugmore, in *A Companion to the Bible*, ed. H. H. Rowley [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2¹⁹⁶³] 554); cf. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles of John* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1970) 152–153.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. G. R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation* (NCB; London: Oliphants, 1974) 114; George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 75; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (NLC; London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1978) 135. Also interpreting the elders as angels are G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (BNTC; London: A. & C. Black, 1971) 63–64; Schweizer, *Church Order* 135 (=13e); O. Schmitz, *TDNT* 3 (1965) 166, 167; W. Michaelis, *TDNT* 4 (1967) 249 with n. 56; G. Bornkamm, *TDNT* 6 (1968) 668.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. F. F. Bruce, ‘The Spirit in the Apocalypse’, in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament* (see n. 47 above) 333–344 (esp. 337–338); Lampe, ‘“Grievous Wolves”’ (as in n. 52 above) 257.

¹⁰⁸ Schweizer, *Church Order* 135 (=13f). Cf. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity* 121.

¹⁰⁹ G. Bornkamm, *TDNT* 6 (1968) 669; cf. Dunn (as in previous note).

¹¹⁰ G. Bornkamm, *TDNT* 6 (1968) 669, has remarked: ‘That Ephesus and the other churches of Asia Minor, of Paul’s old mission field, were still spiritual and prophetic communities and had no office-bearers towards the end of the 1st. century is quite out of the question; such a view cannot possibly be reconciled

Revelation, this shows, at the most, that church organization was still fluid during *the New Testament period*, that 'there is no such thing as the New Testament Church order', and that different lines of development are discernible;¹¹¹ the existence of an organized and official ministry remains unaffected.

Further, it is possible, and perhaps even likely, that varying nomenclature used of church leaders refers basically to the same group, so that while 'functional' terms are sometimes employed to emphasize that aspect of the ministry, they point to the same 'functionaries' who are elsewhere described with a more official title: here we think especially of the προϊσταμένους of [1 Thessalonians 5:12](#), the ποιμένες of [Ephesians 4:11](#), and the ἡγούμενοι of [Hebrews 13:17, 24](#), all of whom may well be identical with those described elsewhere as [p.37](#) elders and overseers.¹¹² In any event, there is good reason to believe that most, if not all, of the early Christian communities had at least a rudimentary, and some had a more advanced, form of church organization, although, on the other hand, there are no grounds for thinking that the monepiscopate is to be found within the pages of the New Testament.

(2) Time and again in the course of our survey of the New Testament evidence, it has clearly emerged that function, gift and office are perfectly fused into a united whole: not only in Acts (the appointment of the seven, [6:1-6](#); the Ephesian elders, [20:17, 28](#)) and in Paul (the Pastorals), but also in 1 Peter ([4:10-11; 5:1-4](#)) and in James ([5:14-15](#)), there is ample evidence to substantiate the conclusion that in the case of an office-bearer, office and function are twin aspects of his ministry, for which he must have the appropriate gifts. This is further supported by the alignment of gift with office we have noted elsewhere.¹¹³ All this goes to show that the antithesis which Käsemann and others have set up (in the name of Paul) between charisma and office is a false one; rather is it 'highly questionable whether in Paul's mind or in Peter's, for that matter the two things

with the picture presented by Ac., Past., 1 Pt ...' This emphasis on the existence of officers in the churches concerned is well placed, although we do not subscribe to Bornkamm's late dating of the documents named and consider the implied contrast between 'being spiritual and prophetic' and 'having office-bearers' unacceptable. Cf. Schillebeeckx, *Ministry* 9.

¹¹¹ Schweizer, *Church Order* 13 (=1a), 17 (=1d). Schillebeeckx, *Ministry* 19, makes the following important observation: By contrast with 1 Clement, 'the Pastoral Epistles do not give us any norm whatsoever as to how the ministry must in fact be structured and differentiated; they simply say that the ministry is needed to preserve in a living way the apostolicity of the community's tradition. Only this last point is theologically relevant; giving it specific form is thus evidently a pastoral question, which the church must consider afresh on each occasion'. See also *ibid.*, 146 n. 17.

¹¹² Cf. Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles* 286; idem, *NBCR* 116a (this, however, may be a former opinion no longer held by the author, as is suggested by his remarks in *1 & 2 Thessalonians* [WBC; Waco, Texas: Word, 1982] 120); also Guthrie, *Theology* 761 (the ἡγούμενοι were probably elders); Marshall, *Thessalonians* 147 (the προϊσταμένους refer to elders or bishops in terms of their function); E. J. Forrester/G. W. Bromiley, *ISBER* 1 (1979) 697a ([Acts 20:17-28](#) shows that 'the office of elder, bishop, and pastor was one'); D. G. Stewart, *ZPEB* 1.618b ('In the local churches it seems probable that prophets, pastors and teachers were all appointed to the single office of elder'); G. W. Kirby, *ZPEB* 1.853b ('elders have the functions of both pastors and teachers'); Barth, *Ephesians* 2.438 (elders, bishops, teachers, shepherds—all these functions probably belong together'). Schillebeeckx, *Ministry* 145 n. 10, considers 'pastors' in [Ephesians 4:11; Acts 20:28](#) and [1 Peter 5:1-4](#) (texts which he assigns to the post-apostolic period) 'a general term for all church officials'.

¹¹³ 'Charismatic versus Organized Ministry?' 205; 'Spiritual Gifts or Organized Ministry? (2) Some Conclusions', *The Harvester* 60/5 (May 1981) 34-35 (34c). On the linking of ἀντιλήμψεις with the work of deacons and κυβερνήστεις with overseers respectively, cf. also C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (HNTC; New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1968) 295-296; J. E. Forrester/G. W. Bromiley, *ISBER* 1 (1979) 697a; Barnett, *The Diaconate* 30-31.

were ever separated'.¹¹⁴ There is in fact a necessary healthy tension between charisma and office, which has been well described by Edward Schillebeeckx as follows:

Ministry without charisma becomes starved and threatens to turn into a power institution; charisma without any institutionalization threatens to be [p. 38](#) volatilized into fanaticism and pure subjectivity, quickly becoming the plaything of opposing forces, to the detriment of the apostolic communities.¹¹⁵

(3) This does not mean, however, that gifts cannot be expressed independently of office. The truth is rather that while office must be accompanied by charisma corresponding to the function of the office,¹¹⁶ charisma can be employed in service either through office or apart from office. As far as the actual lists of charismata are concerned (cf. [1 Cor. 12:8–10, 28–30](#); [Rom. 12:6–8](#); [Eph. 4:11](#)), a distinction may be drawn between the more private gifts (sharing, caring, showing mercy) to be exercised in a personal capacity and the more public ones intended for those representing the regular ministry of the church: apostles, prophets, teachers, presbyter-bishops and deacons.¹¹⁷ A further distinction should probably be made between 'gifts of permanent validity and value, and gifts of temporary and apostolic usage, now withdrawn'¹¹⁸—among which apostles and, to a large extent, prophets may be classed.¹¹⁹ These distinctions may be correlated with a third one, viz. that between the 'specialized ministry' and the 'common service' clearly presented in [Ephesians 4:7–16](#);¹²⁰ the specialized ministry comprised the more public gifts and hence the regular ministry of the church, which, with the passing away of the unique order of apostles and the distinctly miraculous order of prophets, became essentially identical with that of the presbyter-bishops [p. 39](#) and deacons.¹²¹ [James 5:14–15](#) brings a salutary reminder that a supernatural charisma (such as that of healing intercession) is by no means incompatible with the official ministry of presbyter-bishops.

¹¹⁴ Guthrie, *Theology* 765; cf. 768, 771, 772; G. W. Bromiley, *ISBER* (1979) 695b.

¹¹⁵ Schillebeeckx, *Ministry* 24.

¹¹⁶ Or else the 'serious symptom' described by Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority* 1, results—'when the office-bearer ... invests his office with dignity only to the extent to which he himself is invested with the dignities of office'!

¹¹⁷ Cf. Fung, 'Charismatic versus Organized Ministry?' 211; 'Spiritual Gifts or Organized Ministry? (2)' 34d. G. W. Bromiley, *ISBER* 1 (1979) 517b, can speak of 'a distinct NT tendency ... for the various functions of prophecy, teaching, and even perhaps evangelism to be assimilated to that of oversight in more settled congregational conditions'.

¹¹⁸ Ralph P. Martin, *1 Corinthians—Galatians* (London: Scripture Union, 1968) 32. 'The danger in refusing this distinction is seen in attempts made to recapture "apostolic Christianity" which are (a) forgetful that the Spirit is our contemporary and fashion *new* gifts for the needs of the twentieth century and (b) guilty of theological anachronism, harking back to a past which is beyond recall' (*ibid.*, 32–33).

¹¹⁹ Cf. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1961) 85: 'In the churches of the first generation the apostles and prophets discharged a unique rôle, which in some essential features has been taken over by the canonical writings of the New Testament'; Davies, *Christian Origins* 244: 'these prophets soon disappeared from the life of the Church'; and Fung, 'Charismatic versus Organized Ministry?' 213 n. 47.

¹²⁰ See n. 98 above.

¹²¹ Cf. Fung, 'Charismatic versus Organized Ministry?' 213 with n. 48; R. A. Bodey, *ZPEB* 4.240b: 'In view of the NT evidence, there seems to be no reasonable doubt that the apostolic Church had only two official *orders* of local ministry: presbyter-bishop and deacon'.

(4) We have repeatedly pointed out, in discussing the passages mentioned under point (2) above, the priority of the Spirit or his gifts in the mutual relations of function, gift and office. It is the charisma, not the office, that creates the ministry: the office is but the channel through which the office-bearer may exercise the given charisma for a particular function;¹²² and the church's appointment to office (where such is involved) is but a sign of recognizing a person's spiritual gifts and a response to God's will made known in the bestowing of those gifts.¹²³ In this sense, it is correctly said that 'all order is an "afterwards", an attempt to follow what God has already designed'.¹²⁴ At the same time, we may not go so far as to say that church order in the New Testament is 'functional, regulative, serving, *but not constitutive*; and that is what is decisive';¹²⁵ for, in as much as the Church does confirm by its order those whom the Spirit has marked out in freedom (as, e.g., in the case of the Seven in [Acts 6:1–6](#), or of the presbyter-bishop in [Acts 14:23; 20:28](#) and in the Pastoral Epistles,) it gives evidence that church order even in the New Testament is not entirely devoid of a constitutive character.¹²⁶

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Evangelicals and the Doctrine of the Church in European Church History

Klaas Runia

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In this paper the author discusses some of the tensions concerning the nature of the church that developed within Evangelicalism in Europe during the past 450 years. He gives special attention to Luther's concept of 'Church within the Church'; to the tension between the

¹²² 'We have perhaps to learn from the NT that function is more important than office' (G. W. Bromiley, *ISBER* 1 [1979] 517a). The author speaks of 'the two *functions* of episcopate and diaconate' even in the Pastorals (*ibid.* 517b, emphasis added).

¹²³ G. Lambert, *ZPEB* 1.861b: 'In the NT church emphasis was placed upon the possession of spiritual gifts as a necessary condition for ministerial leadership'.

¹²⁴ Schweizer, *Church Order* 102 (=7m); cf. 187 (=22g), 200 (=24h) n. 753. Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic* 12 n. 40, thinks that the words just quoted 'can be misleading'; but in context there should be no danger of their meaning being misunderstood.

¹²⁵ Schweizer, *Church Order* 205 (=24l) (emphasis supplied).

¹²⁶ Cf. Barnett, *The Diaconate* (see n. 14 above) 15–16. The author objects that Schweizer's position (as cited in our text, see previous note) 'would seem to lead to a kind of subjectivism that is not in accord with the record of Scripture and that serves to weaken the unity of the Church' (15), and that while 'a major concern of Schweizer ... is to maintain the freedom of the Holy Spirit to work in the Church', yet 'it is surely limiting the freedom of the Spirit to argue that he does not act here in a constitutive way'. (16).

Reformers and Anabaptists, to European pietistic and renewal movements and the unity of Church as only spiritual. Some discussion in the area of Pentecostalism and of para-church agencies would have been welcomed.

(Editor)

INTRODUCTION

There are several reasons why it is very necessary for us as Evangelicals to give serious attention to this topic.

1. The main churches of Europe generally find themselves in a *situation of crisis*.

Nothing has really changed since Alfred Kuen wrote in his book *I Will Build My Church* (E.T. in 1971): 'Everything that bears the name church is at present passing through one of the most serious crises in history, at least in Europe'.¹

2. The *solutions* offered so far are not really hopeful and helpful. I mention a few.

There is the *ecumenical* solution offered by the Ecumenical Movement as embodied in the WCC. Here all emphasis is put upon the organic unity of the church. But is this really the solution? Will the lame and the blind when they go together, really be able to help one another in reaching the goal?² Others including many in the ecumenical movement believe that the churches should concentrate on their social task. In this way they might become relevant again. But does the world really need a church that basically has no other message than the progressive political and social parties of our own day? Others again feel that the churches' problem can be solved by a more sociological approach to the institutional side of the church. Being a human organization, the church should listen to the advice of the sociologist, whose [p. 41](#) job it is to study human organizations, and who can offer remedies for organizations that have lost their touch with reality. Usually the solution offered is a pluralist church that should try to cater for the needs and problems of today's people.

3. Now I am sure that these solutions do not have a strong appeal for most Evangelicals. But do we have a better solution? Here I come to the third reason why it is necessary for us to give serious attention to the question of ecclesiology. I am afraid that it is *one of the most neglected parts of our doctrine*. In my preparation for this paper I glanced through and at times also carefully studied many books on Evangelicalism. What struck me time and again was the fact that little or nothing was said about the evangelical doctrine of the church. When e.g., Donald G. Bloesch enumerates the doctrinal hall marks of Evangelicalism,³ he mentions many important matters, but there is no separate item on the doctrine of the church. The church is mentioned only under the heading: 'the spiritual mission of the church'. The same is true of Millard Erickson's *The New Evangelical Theology*⁴ and Fritz Laubach's *Aufbruch der Evangelikalen*.⁵

¹ Alfred F. Kuen, *I Will Build My Church*, 1971, 283. He mentions the following 'manifestations' of this crisis: dechristianization of Europe, depopulation of the churches, the church having become a ceremonial institution, internal secularization of the church, multitudinism, social Christianity, the weakening of the message, clericalism and institutionalism, and the scattering of the Christians. He also mentions some causes, such as liberal theology, intellectualism of faith, the Constantinian system (299–304).

² Cf. Alan Cole, *The Body of Christ*, 1964, 86.

³ Donald G. Bloesch, *The Evangelical Renaissance*, 1974, 48–79.

⁴ Published in 1968.

⁵ Published in 1972.

For all these reasons it is high time for us as Evangelicals to give serious thought to the doctrine of the church. At the same time we must realize from the outset that it is a very difficult topic. For can one really speak of *the* evangelical doctrine of the church? Are Evangelicals not hopelessly divided, not only as to their doctrine of the church, but also as to their actual place within the church? Some belong to established or national churches. Others belong to Free churches. Others again belong to assemblies of brethren or charismatic groups. How can we ever find a common doctrine of the church in such a situation?

I have been asked to approach the matter primarily from a Europeanhistorical perspective. When I studied my subject, I found it to be increasingly fascinating, but I also discovered that the pattern is so intricate that after a while one has the feeling of wandering in a labyrinth without an exit!

I. EVANGELICALS AND THE CHURCH IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Evangelicalism has a very *intricate and complicated pedigree*. Historically it has its origin in the Reformation of the 16th century. But there is not a direct and straight line from the Reformation to today's Evangelicals. In the intervening centuries all kinds of developments took place [P. 42](#) and in each case one can discern a specific ecclesiology. At times there were even several ecclesiologies side by side. In this main part of my paper I shall briefly outline the various developments, each time concentrating on the concomitant doctrine(s) of the church.

The Reformers

a) *Luther and Calvin*

I shall start with the *16th century Reformation* itself. It is a well-known fact that the doctrine of the church had a central place in the theology of the Reformers. One can even defend the thesis that for the first time in history a fundamental and full-orbed ecclesiology was developed. Medieval theology had no doctrine of the church. No council had ever formulated such a doctrine. The church was simply there! Yet there was an underlying conception which was generally accepted. The church was the church of the sacrament and of the priest, it could dispose of God's grace and therefore was an institution of immense power. Consequently all emphasis was placed upon the visible institution. God's church, the Body of Christ, was simply identical with the visible organization of the R.C. Church.

Following Luther's rediscovery of the Gospel of justification by pure grace and by faith alone, the Reformers arrived at an altogether different conception of the church. For them the church was fundamentally an object of faith. It is the people of God, called into being by the preaching of the Word of God. The first of the *Theses of Berne* of 1528, one of the oldest official documents of the Reformation, puts it thus: 'The holy Christian Church, whose only Head is Christ, is born of the Word of God, abides in the same, and does not listen to the voice of a stranger'.⁷ The first Lutheran confession, the Confession of Augsburg of 1530, says basically the same in part. VII: 'It is ... taught among us that one holy Christian church will be and remain for ever. This is the assembly of all

⁷ Arthur Cochrane (ed.), *Reformed Confessions of the Sixteenth Century*, 1956, 49.

believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel'.⁸

The same idea we also find in all the Reformed confessions of the 16th century. The church is essentially spiritual in nature. It is a spiritual reality which can be seen and recognized only by the eyes of faith. Yet this emphasis on the spiritual nature of the church did not mean a flight into spiritualism, as if the true church were a kind of Platonic reality, [p. 43](#) floating somewhere above the historical reality of the institutional church. On the contrary, the church which is invisible as to its spiritual nature, at the same time is visible in the earthly community of believers, in whose midst the Gospel is being preached and the sacraments are being administered. Calvin in particular always placed much emphasis upon the visible aspect of the church. In his *Institutes*: 'Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists (cf. [Eph. 2:20](#)). For his promise cannot fail: 'Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them' ([Matt. 18:20](#)).⁹ He liked to call this church 'the common mother of all the godly, which bears, nourishes, and brings up children to God, kings and peasants alike; and this is done by the ministry'.¹⁰ Similar ideas we find in Luther's writings.

At this very point, however, of the unity of the visible and invisible aspects of the church the Reformers were facing a very difficult problem. The medieval church, which they tried to reform, had always been a *Volkskirche*, a national or multitudinist church. Every citizen of the land was automatically a member of the church. In the Reformation this pattern continued. Entire cities and villages joined the Reformation movement. Entire parishes turned wholesale from Roman-Catholic into Lutheran or Reformed. But could one really call such parishes 'true' churches of Jesus Christ? Luther became very vexed by this problem. Around 1522/23 he began to wonder whether it was correct to offer the Lord's Supper indiscriminately to the crowds who asked for it, not out of spiritual hunger, but for the simple reason that it had always been like that. In a sermon on Good Friday, 1523, he suggested: 'One could gather separately those who believe correctly ... I have been wanting for a long time to do it, but it has not been possible; for there has not yet been sufficient preaching and writing'.¹¹ A few years later, in his book *The German Mass*,¹² Luther actually advocated the idea of the *ecclesiola in ecclesia* (the little church within the church), i.e., a nucleus of true believers existing within the territorial church as a leaven. To be true, this was not his ideal. The ideal was the reformation of the entire church. But since the latter was unattainable, the idea of gathering the true believers into an inner church, seemed 'second best'.¹³ However, as far as we know, Luther never practised it. Already in *The German Mass* he [p. 44](#) wrote: 'As yet I neither can nor desire to begin, or to make rules for such a congregation or assembly. I have not yet the persons necessary to accomplish it; nor do I observe many

⁸ Theodore G. Tappert (ed.), *The Book of Concord*, 1959, 32.

⁹ John Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, i, 9.

¹⁰ John Calvin, *Commentary on Eph. 4:13*.

¹¹ Cf. Kuen, *op. cit.*, 204.

¹² Bard Thompson (ed.), *Liturgies of the Western Church*, 1961, 124f.

¹³ Thompson, *op. cit.*, 126.

who strongly urge it'.¹⁴ I think there were several reasons why Luther never came around to putting the 'ecclesiola' into practice. (1) He leaned too much on the civil authorities for the execution of the reformation of the church. In fact, he allowed them to organize the church and to govern it by law.¹⁵ (2) He retained the idea of the Constantinian *Corpus Christianum*, that is, of a Christian nation, which in its totality is regarded as Christian and in which 'throne and altar' are so closely related that the State also has a say in the affairs of the church. (c) He was frightened by the impact of the spiritualist movement, in particular of the Anabaptists.

b) The Radical Reformers—Anabaptists

This leads me to the views of the *Radical Reformers*. They had a much more radical conception of the reformation of the church. In their opinion the church had 'fallen' in the era of Constantine, when the illicit union of church and state came about, a union which ever after was perpetuated by the rite of infant baptism which caused numberless nominal Christians to be added continually to the church. The radical Reformers believed that it was impossible to revive and/or to reform the existing church. The only solution was to restore it to its prime virginity. Not reformation but restitution, was their slogan. This meant:¹⁶ (1) rejection of infant baptism—one can enter the church only through baptism following a personal confession of faith; (2) strict discipline among those who have entered the church; (3) evangelistic witness to those outside the church; and (4) abolition of all hierarchical distinctions between believers.

The main Reformers were strongly opposed to this view of the church. As a matter of fact, the Anabaptists and others belonging to the Radical Reformation were persecuted by the new Protestants no less than by the Roman-Catholics. Yet the ideas of the radical Reformers continued to have their impact on many people in the following centuries. In a way, one could say that the various strands of thought present in the 16th century have influenced all the following movements. All the main ideas were already present in that formative century and they all return in subsequent developments: the idea of the essentially spiritual nature of the [p. 45](#) church, the idea of the national church, of the 'ecclesiola in ecclesia', of the free church, of the gathered church, etc. They do not always return in simple purity. Sometimes the lines cross each other, at other times they repel each other. But whatever may be the case, they are all basic ideas of the 16th century, recurring in ever new patterns.

Movements after the Reformation

a) The Puritans of England

In the period after the Reformation we see various developments. The first one we must mention is the *Puritan Movement* in England, in the 16th and 17th centuries. One can distinguish three concentric circles: (1) It sought the inward reformation of people through conversion and sanctification. (2) It sought the outward reformation of the church by a closer adherence to the biblical structures of the church. (3) It sought the renewal of society as a whole by promoting more respect for the things of God and the laws of England.

¹⁴ M. Lloyd-Jones, 'Ecclesiola in Ecclesia', in *Approaches to Reformation of the Church*, 1965, 61.

¹⁵ Cf. E. Brunner, *The Misunderstanding of the Church*, 1953, 97.

¹⁶ Cf. D. P. Kingdom, 'The Anabaptists', in *Approaches to Reformation of the Church*, 1965, 21.

Most Puritans had a high view of the church, basically similar to that of the main Reformers. For this reason they were very wary of all separatism. They did not want to break away from the Church of England, but sought to reform it from within or, as J. I. Packer put it, they wanted to eliminate 'Popery from its worship, prelacy from its government, and pagan irreligion from its membership'.¹⁷ The primary object of its leaders was to influence the whole of the Church of England and to carry on the reform, which they felt had stopped instead of going on and completing itself. Unfortunately, the political developments did not allow them to reach their goal of reforming the church from within, and consequently in the second half of the 17th century they were forced to establish their own Presbyterian and Congregationalist Churches.

b) The Reformed Pietists of Holland

A second development, which is of interest for our subject took place in the Netherlands. It was the so-called *Second Reformation Movement*, later on issuing in *Reformed Pietism*. This movement was deeply influenced by the theology of the Reformers, on the one hand, and by English Puritanism, on the other. With the latter it shared the concern to complete the reformation of doctrine by a reformation of life. Hence its emphasis on personal piety and holiness of life. This naturally implied a critical attitude towards the situation in the national church. To be true, *p. 46* they were not separatists. Usually they did not break away from the established church, but preferred to meet in so-called 'conventicles', small gatherings of converted people, usually held on Sunday evening, for the purpose of discussing the sermons of the day or a portion of Scripture. Yet it cannot be denied that this practice did introduce an anti-institutional element into their view of the church, expressing itself in depreciation of the established church with its preaching and sacraments. In this way separatist tendencies were encouraged, at times leading to actual separation.

c) The German Pietists

The third development is that of *German Pietism*. This was a movement for spiritual renewal, arising in the Lutheran Churches of continental Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries. In many ways it was a reaction against Lutheran Orthodoxy with its emphasis on pure doctrine and the objective aspects of the Christian faith as found in the Word, the sacraments and the confessions, tending to neglect the 'inward' accompaniments of faith (such as regeneration, the indwelling of the Spirit, etc). Over against this Orthodoxy the Pietists stressed the necessity of the Spirit's work in the believer. Likewise it is not surprising that in Pietism the idea of holding private gatherings of the converted came up again. Philip Spener, the father of German Pietism, started them in his own house in 1670. The object was to bring converted people together for Bible reading, prayer, discussion of the sermons, etc., in order to deepen their spiritual life. Soon these circles were called '*collegia pietatis*' (hence the name 'Pietism'). In his *Pia Desideria*, published in 1675, Spener developed the idea in greater detail. Over against the evils of the time, as found in both church and society, he proposed the establishment of *ecclesiolae in ecclesia* not only for Bible reading but also for mutual watch and helpfulness. In support of these ideas he made a direct appeal to Luther, in particular to his doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. It should be noted that Spener and his followers did not reject, or separate themselves from, the institutional church. In fact, Spener was very much against all separatism. Yet it is evident that their emphasis on the small groups of true believers

¹⁷ J. I. Packer, 'Puritanism as a Movement of Revival', in *The Evangelical Quarterly*, Vol. LII, 1980, 3.

could easily lead to indifference to the church as an institution. The real Christian fellowship was experienced in the small circles.

One more thing must be mentioned at this point. There was a real ecumenical thrust in Pietism. The Pietists were quick to seek spiritual unity with other Christians. Denominational ties were far less important than the spiritual unity we have in Christ and through the Holy Spirit. [p. 47](#) This attitude has deeply influenced subsequent evangelical movements, such as the missionary movements and the student movement.

d) The Methodists

For the fourth development we move again to 18th century England, where *Methodism* came into existence. In many ways it was analogous to what had happened and was happening on the continent. Again we observe the emphasis on the small circles of converted people and on the priesthood of all believers, to which now is added the idea of lay-officers. As we all know, John Wesley did not deliberately seek a separation from the Church of England (as a matter of fact, he himself died a member of the Church of England), yet from the beginning it was virtually inevitable that Methodism should become a separate body. In particular when Wesley started an annual conference, he went beyond Luther's idea of the *ecclesiola in ecclesia* and set himself and the whole movement on the road that led to separation.

Many Evangelicals in the Church of England did not go along with Wesley, but preferred to do their work within the established church. Even though critical of many aspects of church life, they nevertheless believed that, as long as they were free to preach and/or believe the Gospel, they should try to reform the church from within.

e) Revival movements

The fifth development we have to mention is that of the *revival movements* of the 18th and 19th centuries. Although they originated in the churches of North America, they have deeply influenced various sections of European Christians, both on the continent and in the United Kingdom. Their emphasis on conversion and personal holiness, to a large extent derived from Puritan writings and Methodist preaching, changed the face of many congregations. One of their richest fruits was the rise of the modern missionary movement. Yet we must also add that revivalist thinking has strongly contributed to a further neglect of the doctrine of the church. Due to its emphasis on personal faith, it strongly promoted the idea that the spiritual unity of true believers is the main and real thing and that, compared with this, the institutional church is of secondary importance.

Movements in the 19th Century

All these various movements of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries have continued to exert their influences on the *19th century* and oftentimes have given impulses for new developments. Quite often there was a [p. 48](#) cross-fertilization between the various movements. Time permits me to mention only a few important aspects.

a) In the United Kingdom

For the United Kingdom I must mention two developments in particular.

(i) In 1846 the *Evangelical Alliance* was established. In a time of increasing secularization, on the one hand, and a growing strength of ecumenism, on the other, leading people from various Protestant churches and groups came together with the object of enabling Christians 'to realize in themselves and to exhibit to others that a living and everlasting union binds all true believers together in the fellowship of the

Church of Christ'.¹⁸ These last words are taken from the tail-end of the first resolution, unanimously adopted by the Inaugural Conference. What did the brethren mean by the word 'Church'? What did they mean by the term 'unity'? Let us listen to the first part of the same resolution. It starts as follows: 'That the church of the living God, while it admits of growth, is one church, never having lost, and being incapable of losing its essential unity. Not, therefore, to create this unity, but to confess it, is the design of their assembling together'. Dr. J. B. A. Kessler has pointed out that these words have played a vital role in the whole development of the Evangelical Alliance.¹⁹ According to these words essential unity can never be lost. So, whatever is lost by all our divisions, is virtually non-essential. Or to put it in another way, visible, organizational unity is not directly related to the essence. 'From here it is only a small step to say that our divisions are not so important after all'.

(ii) The second development to be mentioned for the United Kingdom in the 19th century is the rise of the *holiness movement* in the second half of the century. Here the great object was the deepening of spiritual life and the promotion of practical sanctification. The movement found its main platform in the Keswick Conferences, which were inter-confessional and inter-denominational in structure. It cannot be denied that these conferences have been a great blessing for many Christians, but it must also be admitted that by their one-sided emphasis on the spiritual nature of Christian unity they have fostered the idea that the institutional church is virtually of secondary importance. Many people, belonging to 'mixed' local congregations, experienced their real spiritual fellowship at the conferences, rather than in the local congregation itself. [p. 49](#)

b) On the Continent

For the *Continent* we first of all mention the so-called *Reveil Movement*, which became very influential in certain parts of Switzerland, France, Germany and Holland. Having its origin in the awakening of the early 19th century, it strongly emphasized the need for a personal relationship with Christ. In some sections of the movement people were very confessional, this fact at times leading to their separation from the national church. Others stayed within the national church and tried to reform it from within. Others again were forced out of the national church and thus compelled to establish their own free churches. On the whole, they were convinced of the importance of the institutional church. But since the leadership of the church, both locally and nationally, usually was in the hands of liberal churchmen, the people of the Reveil Movement often sought an interim solution in bringing the faithful together in small groups for Bible study, prayer, etc. In other words, the ideal of the 'ecclesiolae in ecclesia' again played an important role.

As for 19th century *Germany* we must mention the fact that there were several movements of awakening. Some of them were more pietistic, others more confessional, others again a combination of both. One of the most important movements, that arose in the third quarter of the century was the *Gemeinschaftsbewegung* (the Community Movement). According to the recent *Gemeindelexikon*²⁰ it had several roots: the Reformation of the 16th century; Pietism in the form of Neo-Pietism; the Revival Movement; and the Holiness Movement. Various organizations and conferences

¹⁸ Cf. J. B. A. Kessler Jr., *A Study of the Evangelical Alliance in Great Britain*, 1968, 36.

¹⁹ Kessler, *op. cit.*, 36/7.

²⁰ Erich Gedlbach a.o. (eds), *Evangelisches Gemeindelexikon*. 1978, 201.

belonged (and still belong) to it. As regards the relationship With the institutional churches, we observe two different attitudes. Some tried to work within the institutional church, others exhibited more separatist tendencies and had their own fellowship meetings. Yet even they generally did not break with the institutional church.²¹

Nowadays there is a general tendency to be active within the church.

In the 19th century we find similar patterns in the *Scandinavian countries*. Many evangelical Christians worked within the established church. Others were led to the establishment of Free Churches either on the ground of their own ecclesiology or by compulsion from the side of the State and the State Church.²²

Looking back for a moment we may conclude that there were some traits common to nearly all these 19th century movements: [p. 50](#)

- (1) They placed much emphasis on personal piety and holiness.
- (2) They all believed that there is a spiritual unity of all true believers.
- (3) They often exhibited an ecumenical spirit. Believers, belonging to different confessions and denominations, worked together in the area of missions, social and philanthropic work, education etc.
- (4) In many cases there was little interest in the reformation of the institutional church. The real fellowship was often experienced in small groups which met for personal devotions. Consequently, the doctrine of the church remained under-developed.

Movements in the 20th Century

All these lines continued in *our 20th century*. Especially in the second half of this century, Evangelicalism appears to be a growing force everywhere. Yet the doctrine of the church remains a very problematic area. As to their ecclesiastical allegiance, Evangelicals are sorely divided. Many of them belong to the national church in their country. Many others belong to various Free Churches, but by now the older and larger of these have also obtained a *Volkskirche* character. There are some Evangelical Free Churches, but usually they are rather small. I am inclined to think that by far the greatest number of Evangelicals still experience their real spiritual fellowship in inter-denominational organizations rather than in their local parish or congregation.

As I said, the doctrine of the church is still a problem. This became quite manifest in the *Covenant of Lausanne*, 1974. After an introductory article on the Purpose of God, there are two articles on Scripture and Christ. Next, the articles 4 and 5 immediately speak of the evangelistic and social responsibilities of evangelical Christians. The church is mentioned only at the end of article 5, where 'incorporation into his church' is mentioned as one of the results of evangelism. It is only in article 6 that the church is explicitly mentioned, but this very same article closes with the statement: 'The church is the community of God's people rather than an institution'. Although I fully agree with the first part of this statement (the church in its deepest essence is the community of God's people), I must object to the implicit suggestion of a contrast between the church as the community of believers and the church as an institution. It is always both at the same time, and exactly here we find our real problem; Article 7 of the Covenant contains a call to co-operation and unity, but it is all expressed in individual rather than ecclesiastical terms, even though the article starts with the beautiful statement: 'We

²¹ *Ibid.*, 212.

²² Cf. Philip E. Hughes (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of Christianity*, Vol. IV (1972), 118.

affirm that the church's visible unity in truth is God's purpose'. I believe that the ecclesiological ambiguity of [p. 51](#) Lausanne is characteristic for the evangelical movement as a whole in our day.

II. THE EVANGELICAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

I would like to start with some general comments on Evangelicalism made by W. Stanford Reid. Some twenty years ago he wrote a rather sharply worded article in *Christianity Today* on 'Evangelical Defeat by Default'.²³ In it he mentioned four significant shortcomings of evangelicals in general. (1) They have failed to come to grips with the contemporary situation. (2) They have not shown sufficient churchmanship. (3) They have often failed to support fellow-evangelicals when they tried to rectify the situation by action. (4) They have failed in the realm of thought. A little further in the same article he also mentions some of the causes, such as 'sheer worldliness' (he means: we are scared of what liberals may say about us) laziness, both spiritual and intellectual; a false spirituality, manifesting itself in a refusal to take action; and, finally, the *erroneous doctrine of the church* which is so often found among Evangelicals. He describes this erroneous doctrine as follows: Many Evangelicals 'tend to regard the visible, organized church as relatively unimportant, primarily because in it one finds many who have little faith, if any at all'.

Is this charge of Stanford Reid borne out by the facts discovered in our historical survey? Let us see what we have found so far, I mention the following points.

1. There often was (and is) a *one-sided emphasis on the spiritual nature of the church*. I do not deny, of course, that the deepest secret of the church is that it is the people of God, the body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit: On purpose I mention Father, Son and Holy Spirit, The real-nature of the church Can be seen only within a trinitarian framework, and this real nature can be recognized only by faith. Luther was well aware of this, as appears from his famous dictum: *sub cruce tecta est ecclesia, latent sancti*—hidden under the cross is the church, hidden are the saints. But where do we find this spiritual reality? Nowhere else than in all those congregations, parishes, assemblies (or whatever other name may be used), in which people come together to worship God, to hear the word preached and to partake of the sacraments. It is unfortunate indeed that in our evangelical tradition we have often overstressed the distinction between the visible and the invisible aspects of the church. We have even used this [p. 52](#) distinction as a means of escaping from the troubles in our own local church or denomination. Although we are still members of the visible church, have our children baptized in it and celebrate the Lord's Supper with the local congregation, yet we find our real fellowship outside it. We experience our real fellowship in the many undenominational organizations which have come into existence in the last century and a half. When we go to our undenominational conferences and conventions, we even have communion services!

2. My second point is closely related to the foregoing: there was (and still is) a *one-sided emphasis on the spiritual unity of the believers*. At Lausanne Henri Blocher put it thus: Most evangelical Christians 'believe unity is given, and they stress it; it is *invisible* and "spiritual". No one can destroy the link which joins all the true believers, the answer to Jesus' request which the Father could do nothing but fulfil, because He always grants his Son's request. The existence of varied denominations has nothing to do with this

²³ *Christianity Today*, Vol. VI, no. 7.

certain unity, definitely obtained “in the Spirit”.²⁴ Again I must immediately add that the unity of God’s children is essentially of a spiritual nature. But again we may not fall into the dichotomy of invisible versus visible. I am afraid that we often do fall into this trap and that this is largely due to the fact that we have a too individualistic concept of faith. We put all emphasis on the personal relationship with Jesus Christ, in and through the Holy Spirit. Wherever one recognizes this in another person, there is unity. This is true, of course, but it is not the whole truth! When Jesus in the high priestly prayer in [John 17](#) prayed for the unity of his followers, this was not just a matter of spiritual unity only, but he also spoke of its visibility. As a matter of fact he mentioned it twice and in both instances it had a bearing on the missionary task of his followers. Twice our Lord prayed ‘that they may be one ... so that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me’ ([17:21](#), [23](#)). Are we, with our emphasis on spiritual unity across denominational barriers, really obedient to this prayer of our Lord?

3. My third point is a question: To what extent are we moving along *Anabaptist* lines rather than along the path shown by the *main Reformers*? I do not ask this in judgemental spirit. I do not want to glorify the main Reformers, nor do I want to condemn the radical Reformers. It may well be that we have to learn from both parties. At any rate, I am inclined to think that both parties have left us with an unsolved problem. I mean the problem indicated by the terms [p. 53](#) ‘national’ or ‘gathered’ church, or if you wish, ‘multitudinist’ and ‘voluntarist’ church. In the former case people belong to the church by birth and therefore are baptized as infants. As long as they do not intentionally withdraw, they are regarded and treated as rightful members of the church. In the case of the gathered or voluntarist church, only converted or born-again people can be members of the church. Usually admission takes place by means of adult or believers’ baptism.

These two views are often identified with the main position of the time of the Reformation. The great Reformers would have opted for the national church idea, the Anabaptist for the gathered church idea. In a very general sense this is not incorrect, yet it is not fully correct either. As far as the main Reformers are concerned, the situation was more complicated than that indicated above. Calvin, for instance, did not simply accept every citizen of Geneva as a rightful member of the church, but tried to purify the church by a strict discipline. Luther, as we have seen, was not happy about the existing situation either, as appears from his suggestion to establish *ecclesiola in ecclesia*. On the other hand, there is no reason to idealize the Anabaptist position either. It may solve certain problems for a certain period of time, but usually after one or two generations the old problems recur. Moreover, may we exclude the children of believers from the membership of the church?

I often have the feeling that as Evangelicals we are not at all clear about the matter. At any rate, there is not a great deal of unanimity at this point. Some Evangelicals emphasize the continuity of the church and believe that they should try to reform the church, to which they belong from within. Others also stay within their historic denomination, but ‘only just’, almost ‘contre coeur’. Their real allegiance is somewhere else. In actual fact they, with Luther and the Pietists, opt for the idea of the *ecclesiola in ecclesia*, although in their case it is an undenominational rather than a denominational ‘ecclesiola’. Others again opt for the gathered church idea. In 1944 the (German) Union of Evangelical-Free Church Congregations even put into its confession: ‘The congregation of the Lord belongs to God’s new creation and is not yet there, where God’s Word is preached and heard, but only there, where people come to the new life and join

²⁴ Henri Blocher, ‘The Nature of Biblical Unity’, *Let the Earth Hear His Voice*, 1975, 381.

the fellowship of God's children'.²⁵ There is much confusion indeed. What G. E. Duffield says about the Evangelicals in the Church of England about the middle of last century seems to apply still to many Evangelicals of our day. He writes, 'Many Evangelicals began to abandon their p. 54 Reformed heritage and become Anabaptist. They neglected their doctrine of the church, they treated the sacraments rather lightly, they formed little interdenominational groups which sought to win individuals for Christ but neglected the wider needs of society, the nation and the state'. When about 1930 the Anglo-Catholics tried to recapture the Church of England, Evangelicals could do hardly anything at all. 'Just because they were interdenominational, they could not tackle the doctrines of the church, of society, of church and state, of baptism, etc, for on all these they were divided'.²⁶ I am glad to notice that today Evangelicals generally are more aware of the problem than their counterparts in the 19th century and the first half of this century. Yet we still have a long way to go.

4. In the same way—my fourth point—we also have to give serious consideration to the question of separation. It cannot be denied that in our historical survey we often noticed separatist tendencies. Admittedly, it would be wrong to equate the ideas of 'ecclesiolae in ecclesia', of conventicles, of 'collegia pietatis', of societies, etc., with separation. In fact, most advocates of this kind of informal gathering of true believers were bitterly and violently opposed to the very idea of separation. Yet history also shows us that their efforts often ended either in frustration or in separation (followed by the formation of a new church, c.f. the Methodists). There are also Evangelicals who follow the Anabaptist line of thought and Consciously defend the idea of Separation. Alfred F. Kuen, e.g., in his book *I will build my church*, categorically states that all attempts to revive the multitudinist churches and to transform them gradually into churches of professing believers have failed.²⁷ He, therefore, calls for 'regrouping the true believers'.²⁸ But will not this course of action lead to an endless proliferation of new churches and denominations? I believe we have to make a serious study of both separation and separatism.²⁹

5. Likewise—my fifth and last point—we have to make a serious study of *church discipline*. There can be no doubt that the New Testament requires such a discipline. There can be no doubt either that all Reformers, both the main and the radical Reformers, advocated it. Of the Anabaptists this is well known. Menno Simons wrote: 'A Church without the practice of genuine apostolic excommunication would be like a town without ramparts, or barriers, a field without enclosure, a p. 55 house without doors or walls'.³⁰ Calvin also was a strong advocate of ecclesiastical discipline. In some Reformed confessions it was even mentioned as the third mark of the true church.³¹ But Luther

²⁵ J. F. Gerhard Goetters, a.o. (eds), *Bekenntnisse der Kirche*, 1970, 282.

²⁶ Gervase E. Duffield, 'New Evangelical Impetus in England', *International Reformed Bulletin*, No. 19 (October 1964), 13f.

²⁷ Kuen, *op. cit.*, 330.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 332.

²⁹ For an initial attempt, see my *Reformation Today*, 109–124.

³⁰ See J. Lecler, *Toleration and Reformation*, 1960, 1, 212.

³¹ Cf. Belgic confession, art. 29—'The marks by which the true Church is known are these: If the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein; if she maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ, if church discipline is exercised in punishing sin; in short, if all things are managed

also strongly advocated it. In two works published in 1539 and 1540 he included it among the seven marks of the visible church! In all Reformation churches it has actually been practised in both the 16th and 17th centuries. From the 18th century onward the larger churches became very lax on this point. Today it is virtually non-existent in the mainline denominations. Evangelicals, belonging to these churches, often acquiesce in this situation. Admittedly, it is a very difficult point. It may be true that it is almost impossible to revive it in today's amorphous churches. Still we should at least reflect upon it and ask ourselves what ought to be done and what can be done. And it may be good for us to remember that, as Dean M. Kelly has pointed out, discipline or 'strictness' has always been characteristic of virtually all significant and society-transforming religious movements.³²

EPILOGUE

Allow me to make a few concluding remarks. I realize that what I have said may at times have sounded rather negative. But I am afraid that this could not be avoided. The history of Evangelicalism does show quite a few negative aspects as far as the doctrine of the church is concerned. Yet I also realize that what I have said is not the whole story by far. There are other aspects which also must be mentioned. Not everything is negative. One could also defend the thesis that the evangelical movement was and is a movement of protest against the decline of the historical churches. One could see it, e.g., as a protest against the spiritual and missionary indolence of the churches, against the rigid structures of the churches, against the clericalistic attitude of many church leaders, etc. But all this does not alter the fact that as Evangelicals we are often woefully weak in our ecclesiology and that it is high time for us to start asking ourselves what our own attitude ought to be and what we can do to bring the church back to a new openness and a new submission to the Word of God. [P. 56](#)

I am convinced that it is *not enough* for us to pray for a *revival*. Of course, we should do that too. Revival is necessary indeed. It points to the divine dimension, the mighty work of God the Holy Spirit. It shows us that in the final analysis the healing of the church is God's work. It also reminds us of our own utter dependence upon God. We cannot revive and renew the church. Only God can do it. And yet revival is not the only word to be said here. We also need the word *reformation*. The Holy Spirit in his reviving activity does not exclude human activity, but rather takes it into his service. What we need are men and women who are willing to be used by the Spirit and who are willing to transform their own lives and the life of their church. Yes, we need both revival and reformation.

It will be clear that in using the word 'reformation' I do not mean a simple return to the 16th century. Apart from the fact that such a return is impossible, it would also be wrong. It would not be reformation, but restoration and rechristianization. I mean 'reformation' in the sense of the famous phrase: 'Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda' a re-formed church must continually be re-formed. What I mean, therefore, is a renewal of the church of *today*, taking into full account the situation and problems of this day and trying to find new ways to make the church again what it ought to be according to the New Testament: 'the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth' ([1 Tim. 3:15](#)). This can be done only when we are really willing

according to the pure Word of God, all things contrary thereto rejected, and Jesus Christ acknowledged as the only Head of the Church'. See Cochrane, *op. cit.*, 210.

³² Cf. Dean M. Kelly, *Why Conservative Churches are Growing*, 1972.

to listen to what the Lord in his Word has to say to us in our day. At this point I would like to recall the well-known words which John Robinson said to the Pilgrim Fathers in 1690: 'I am absolutely convinced that the Lord has other truths to impart to us through his Holy Word'. He then went on to warn against pure traditionalism. 'The Lutherans can see only what Luther saw; they would die rather than accept a certain aspect of the truth revealed to Calvin. As for the Calvinists, they cling to the heritage left them by that great man of God, who, nevertheless, did not know everything'.³³ As Evangelicals too we are often inclined to cling to our own traditions and to judge others by them. Likewise we often judge the churches to which we belong by the same standards. And in the meantime we go our own individualistic ways, ignoring our calling to work towards the reformation of the church.

I am very happy indeed that Evangelicals are waking up to this calling. Perhaps we do not yet know what we ought to do. But the main thing for the moment is the realization that we have to act. Some [p. 57](#) people believe that we have to wait for a crisis before we can act. I beg to disagree with this. If we are waiting for a crisis before we act, the crisis may never come, because crises only come when the trends of the day are opposed by action.³⁴ We must not sit down and wait in an attitude of mere passivity. Let us be active in obedience, having a strong confidence in the Lord. We are not alone. He will guide us by his Spirit. We have his promises which are sure. If only, yes, if only we are on our side, obey his word and do what He tells us in his Word! May the Lord give us the grace to be obedient without question, to be confident without doubt, to go forward without hesitation!

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The Church in Papua New Guinea Change and Continuity

Joshua Daimoi

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The author gives a helpful survey of the tension between change and continuity in the life of the emerging churches in a newly independent country whose society is confronted with enormous social, religious and political pressures. He has some perceptive comments on the shift in role of the western missionary from being a participant to becoming a spectator.

(Editor)

³³ Cf. Kuen, *op. cit.*, 314.

³⁴ Taken from a statement of one of the Leicester Conferences in the sixties. Cf. my *Reformation Today*, 143.

No Papua New Guinean can forget the joy, the excitement, the strong emotional feelings that marked the birth of the 'Independent State' of Papua New Guinea, on 16 September 1975. I will never forget the feeling of pride, joy and deep thankfulness to God as I stood with thousands of others in Port Moresby to mark the official birth of Papua New Guinea.

The nation is now going on eight years old. I wish to speak about the work of the church in this time of change and continuity in our national life.

There are *six* main areas I want to direct attention to:

1. National Churches and Overseas Missionaries,
2. National Policies and Church Work,
3. Weaknesses in the Church at Present,
4. Christian Ways and Ways of our Forefathers,
5. The Church and its Mission,
6. The Next *Ten* Years.

I NATIONAL CHURCHES AND OVERSEAS MISSIONARIES

The phrase 'national churches' is used to represent member churches of the Evangelical Alliance known by such names as: Apostolic Christian Church, the Assemblies of God, the Baptist Union of Papua New Guinea, Christian Brethren, Churches of Christ, Evangelical Church of Papua, the United Church (Highlands Region) and others.

I am using the term 'overseas missionaries' with reference to church workers from countries other than the neighbouring Pacific Island countries. My reason for making this distinction is because Pacific Islanders are more readily accepted by Papua New Guineans than missionaries from other countries. [p. 59](#)

In some places I use the word 'Church' to represent the 'community of faith' or the 'people of God', meaning all the different churches in Papua New Guinea.

One great change we have seen in Papua New Guinea since independence is in the area of leadership. No one can tell what will happen in a newly independent country. Because of this many foreigners, including missionaries, left the country before and soon after independence. Some foreigners went because they believed that Papua New Guineans are the right people to run the affairs of their nation. Many experienced missionaries returned home because they saw independence as meaning the handing over of church work to nationals. I do not think this is the only reason for their going home; if it is, then they made the biggest mistake in their missionary work. They have moved out of the will of God by not remaining and struggling with their national brothers and sisters in the work of building up the Church of God in Papua New Guinea.

We need to find an answer to a second problem related to overseas missionaries. This concerns missionaries who are still with us. In many cases missionaries who are still in New Guinea are becoming more and more 'spectators' rather than active 'participants' in the life of the church. Many times we hear comments such as 'It is your problem. You are the national person. You do it. It is the problem of the church, not the mission'.

Missionaries are not entirely to be blamed for thinking and acting as spectators. As guests in PNG they can be excused for thinking and acting as they do. Much of what they do and say is done in response to the attitudes and feelings of their hosts. So we nationals are directly responsible for the problems stated above. Many times we hear nationals say, 'This is my country' ... 'Em i pasin bilong mipela' ... 'You foreigners' ... 'This is not your country' ... 'You racists' and other phrases. What disturbs me is that these

phrases are used by those of us who are born-again Christians. We cannot therefore blame the missionary for being unsure in what he Should say or do.

The problems I have outlined help to create other problems. Instead of listening to the Word of God we listen to the voices of culture and of the national. We become conscious of what men say rather than what God says. We see things as men see, not as God sees them. This leads us to make a further mistake. Instead of appointing the right person for the job (national or expatriate) we appoint any national to the position because we must have a national. As a result the work suffers, people become unhappy, and those appointed to the job—if they have not been properly trained or prepared—become frustrated, inefficient [p. 60](#) and before long they leave the work. We blame them for being ‘unspiritual’.

How do we overcome these problems? There is not one answer but many. Let me suggest a few. One thing we need is to accept each other and be open to each other as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. For us as Christians, God is our Father. One day we will be with him. Let us practice this truth across all barriers of culture, colour, race and politics while we are still on earth. Acceptance of one another means openness toward one another. We need to be prepared to allow other persons to see us as we are, to correct us, to rebuke us. We should be prepared to have fellowship with each other, to make allowance for each other’s views and to forgive each other.

A second answer to the problem is, we should let missionaries be pastors, chairmen or presidents and leaders of churches and other institutions in PNG. We should submit to each other as we submit to the Lord.

My third suggestion is that we should listen to the Word of God more as a ‘community of faith’ and not just as individuals. Many of the problems we face will best be solved when, as a community of God’s people, we study God’s Word together.

II NATIONAL POLICIES AND CHURCH WORK

The church in any nation is called to live under two sets of laws—the laws of the country and the laws of God. The relationship between church’s loyalty to God and to the country for certain cases is well summed up by Jesus when he said, ‘... pay the Emperor what belongs to the Emperor and, pay God what belongs to God’ ([Mt. 22:21](#)). The context in which Jesus spoke these words makes it very clear that Christians have duties to fulfil to the government for what the government does for the people. Jesus spoke about paying taxes. All of us, Christians and non-Christians, must pay taxes so that the necessary work of the country can go on. It is wrong to ask whether or not a Christian should pay taxes. Here, we have no conflict between our loyalty to God and to the government.

There are; however, times and situations when we are called to be loyal to God rather than to human authority. We have a clear example of this in Acts chapter four. The authorities in Jerusalem had Peter and John arrested for healing a lame man ([Acts 3:6](#)) and teaching the people in the name of Jesus. The authorities knew there was nothing they could do to stop Peter and John preaching for Jesus. In order to stop the matter from spreading any further among the people, they [p. 61](#) decided to warn Peter and John not to speak to anyone in the name of Jesus ([Acts 4:17](#)). In reply, Peter and John answered, ‘You yourselves judge which is right in God’s sight—to obey you or to obey God. For we cannot stop speaking of what we ourselves have seen and heard’. ([Acts 4:19-20](#)). As soon as they were released, they reported the matter to the church and the church reported it to their authority. Part of the church’s report reads; ‘And now, Lord, take notice of the threats they have made, and allow us your servants, to speak your message with all boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal, and grant that wonders and

miracles may be performed through the name of your Holy Servant Jesus' ([Acts 4:29–30](#)). Here we see that the whole community of believers prayed to God to permit them to do the opposite to what the authorities demanded. God approved what they asked because in the next verse we read: 'When they finished praying, the place where they were meeting was shaken. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to proclaim God's message with boldness' ([Acts 4:31](#)).

The key issue here is centred around Jesus Christ—who he is and what he has done and is doing. Jesus Christ came into the world to save mankind, including the authorities in every nation. The Gospel message is for everyone. The preaching of this message must continue until Jesus returns. Jesus commissioned his disciples to do this ([Mt. 28:18–20](#)).

State and Church Relations

What does this tell us in relation to our freedom of conscience—our freedom to express our particular convictions? We who are Christian Melanesians need to be very careful that we do not call on the government to solve matters that belong to the church. Further, we must not allow private matters to become public affairs. If we do not agree with a particular belief or conviction or practice of a brother or sister—regardless of his or her nationality—we must allow such a person the freedom he or she is allowed by our constitution. And of course every person is entitled to his or her opinion. If we, as brothers and sisters in Christ, cannot settle our differences or allow each other freedom then there is something wrong with us.

This leads to my next point, that in matters relating to church doctrine or religious beliefs it is wise for the government not to interfere. The government, or the laws of the country, are not specifically designed to judge doctrinal matters.

Having said this I must also warn missionaries and church workers that freedom of conscience does not mean abusing the constitution of [p. 62](#) the country. While the government may not be able to judge us on doctrinal grounds, we know that we stand under judgement all the time. We are not free to teach what we like; we are only free to declare what God's Word says. This was Paul's personal conviction when he wrote 'We put aside all secret and shameful deeds; we do not act with deceit, nor do we falsify the word of God. In the full light of truth we live in God's sight and try to commend ourselves to everyone's good conscience' ([2 Cor. 4:2](#)).

Church and Government Co-operation

One other thing to think about in relation to national policies is the question of national security. This is a very sensitive issue and one that the government is best qualified to handle. In a developing country we are faced with all kinds of dangers both from inside and outside. We must watch against political, economic and religious manipulation from outside. We also need to watch against personal interest and ambitions on the part of leaders both in the government and the church. It is easy to make rules about what we should do with outsiders or foreigners. It is not so easy to apply the same rule to ourselves. It is possible to allow corruption and personal gain to be carried out under the guise of 'national security'. This is the price Uganda had to pay under the dictatorial rule of Idi Amin. For this reason I believe the church must not allow the government to interfere with its work. We must not sacrifice our religious freedom for the sake of our little misunderstandings and personal problems. If we surrender to Caesar what does not rightly belong to him, we ought to be prepared to pay the high cost that goes with it.

There is one very good national policy that we church people appear to be slow in responding to. This is the policy that relates to equal distribution of wealth. In practical terms this means the government is supposed to assist with development in rural areas.

The best way for us to know what the government can or cannot do is to work closely with our provincial governments. The provincial governments are the 'hands' of the national government. The provincial governments are in the best position to know whether or not a certain national policy can be carried out.

Because Evangelical Alliance churches are for the most part in the rural areas it is up to us to work closely with the government. In the past we in the E.A. Churches have done very little in business and economic development because these did not seem to be 'spiritual' work. All of us know we cannot cut up life into little parts marked [p. 63](#) Religion, Social, Economic, Political. Life is made up of all these parts. We cannot become truly self-supporting churches if we do not take up seriously the question of economic development. For instance, agricultural students from the Christian Leaders' Training College (CLTC) receive very little support from their people or pastors during their twelve-month practical work. It would seem that the institutional church and some of its workers do not see the relevance or value of this work, yet for the students it is of great importance whether or not they develop skills which will improve their quality of life, or join the vast pool of unemployed. Are we a serving church only in the spiritual realm, or a caring and serving church to the whole man?

III WEAKNESSES IN THE CHURCHES

The majority of Evangelical Alliance churches have a mission history that extends no more than thirty years. Real development in national leadership started probably some fifteen years ago. The majority of our church leaders at present are men whom we have taught at CLTC in the last fifteen years. There were national church workers before that time, but because the older pastors have had very little formal training, their contribution is very limited.

Are CLTC students prepared to handle the many demanding problems of pastoral work to which they go? As one who has the joy of teaching these students, I can answer that we do our best in preparing them. The fact that many of them are still in the ministry is a real encouragement to us.

When we look at the responsibilities the graduates get thrown into immediately they leave the College we wonder what it is that enables them to survive. It is obvious that God is faithful and does that for which he calls them ([1 Thess. 5:24](#)). Some CLTC graduates have told me that while CLTC gave them good Bible training and other practical training, they did not know how to be administrators, circuit pastors, how to write business letters, or how to handle a treasurer's work. We know that many of them are occupying these positions and are handling them as well as they can. There are also many who cannot handle them. This is one of the causes of weaknesses in our churches.

Different Voices Pull Church Leaders

Another cause of weakness is related to personality. If we are honest we will admit that all of us have our secret ambitions. Some of us use church work not only for what God wants us to do but also to carry out [p. 64](#) our own plans and ideas. All national churchmen seem to work under four kinds of programmes. There is the programme that the Lord sets. There is the programme the church sets. There is the programme our tribe or *wantoks* set. There is the programme that I set for myself. These four different voices can be grouped into two—the voice of the church and the voice of the tribe. The voice of the church is usually in line with what the Lord wants me to do. The voice of the tribe often controls my own voice or wish. Unless I am strong and mature spiritually, then his will often gives way to my way or the way of my tribe. This happens very easily because

I see my people and feel their concern, so I respond to them. I do not see Jesus Christ, I do not hear him in the same way I hear my people's voices (depending on whether I read the Bible). Therefore I cannot feel his concern; I can ignore him and do what my people want first. I take my people's voice as his voice but if something goes wrong then I know it was not the Lord's will.

One of my deep concerns is that many of the men trained for church work are going into politics—the national and provincial governments as well as local government councils. I am not against Christian involvement in politics. We should encourage more of the *right* kind of Christian to go into this work. The fact that a person is a Christian does not necessarily mean he is the right one to go into politics. Because a person proves to be a very good pastor or effective leader in his community, it does not necessarily follow that he will make a good politician or effectively handle national or international issues.

The question of 'national security' that I have spoken about is very important here also. The people who go into national and provincial governments need to understand and be able to handle national and international issues. They need to be able to educate themselves in these areas if they have not had that kind of education.

Pastors Have Important Development Role

The first thing I want to say to pastors who are moving into politics is, be very clear about your motives as to why you want to be in politics. Second, make sure that it is the Lord who wants you to be there and not yourself. Third, see if you have had the right kind of preparation for the work; for example, do you know what is in our national constitution? How many books on politics or national issues have you read? Fourth, What is wrong with pastoral work? Many of you do not receive much pay. But, is that sufficient reason to go into politics? Let me respectfully say that the work of a pastor is far more important than that of a politician. The pastoral ministry is important because in this ministry [p. 65](#) you are called to prepare people for this life *and* the life to come. Christianity, we know, is not concerned with heaven only. It is concerned with life here on earth as well. In a so-called Christian nation we still have fighting, killing and hatred. The only person who can solve these problems is Jesus Christ. He who now rules from heaven has sent his Holy Spirit into the world. Everyone who believes in him and accepts him into his life possesses the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit who lives in the Christian produces in him love instead of hatred, fellowship instead of fighting, peace instead of killing. Pastors, therefore, have a very important work to do in the building up of our new nation.

We also know that in PNG today there are many misunderstandings between different churches and between the churches and the government. The people who can best help solve these problems are those who have been trained theologically, who know what the Bible says and means. Many of our Christian people do not know what the Bible teaches. If our best qualified pastors go into politics, who is going to teach the people or represent their cases to those in authority?

IV CHRISTIAN WAYS AND NATIONAL CULTURE

In most of his letters Paul described the churches as 'the church of God' or 'the people of God' in a given place. Paul said 'This also includes you who are in Rome, whom God has called to belong to Jesus Christ' ([Rom 1:6](#)). Writing to Corinth Paul said, 'the church of God which is in Corinth' ([1 Cor 1:2](#), [2 Cor 1:1](#)). He said, 'to God's people in Ephesus' ([Eph 1:1](#)). To Philippi he wrote, 'to all God's people in Philippi' ([Phil 1:1](#)). These expressions

tell us who the people are and where they live. The mention of 'Corinth', 'Philippi' and so on tell us that Christians who live in these places need to plan and organize their church or community life in the way that is suitable to their particular situation. Their oneness in Christ makes them one with Christians in other places. But because they belong to a particular place they need to express their life and faith in Christ in ways that are most natural to them. They do not have to copy the way of worship, or their form of church government, from other places. They ought not to allow foreign worship and community patterns to dictate to them. They ought to be free to run their church work in ways that are natural to them.

There are many good things in PNG culture that ought to be encouraged and developed if the church is to be 'the church of God' here. The way we sing, worship, and conduct business meetings does not have to be the same everywhere. [p. 66](#)

After experiencing the freedom Christ offers we do not have to be slaves of a particular pattern. The death of Christ has redeemed all things, including our cultural heritage. We are saved by Christ in a given culture. When we give our lives to Christ as his servants we also offer to him our cultural heritage. Our lives and our culture come under Christ's direct lordship. Christ as Lord of our lives and cultures is responsible for what we ought to keep and what we ought to put away.

Submit to Bible in Context

It is not easy to decide what Christ approves. Christ does not shout to tell us what we should do. The way to discover his will is to search for it in the Bible. Our submission to Christ's Lordship includes our submission to the authority of the Bible. Submission to the Bible does not mean that we blindly accept everything it says without examining the historical, cultural and ethical questions associated with the text. Just because the Bible talks about a certain issue does not mean that we automatically approve it or follow what it says. The Bible has many warnings as well as teachings for our good. Warnings are there to stop us from doing the same things or making the same mistakes. Teachings are given in the Bible for us to take in and obey.

The phrases 'in Rome', 'in Corinth', etc, as well as encouraging us to keep what is good in our culture, stand as a warning also. 'In Rome', 'in Corinth' Christians and non-Christians live together and do many things together. Christians must always remember that the honour of Jesus Christ is dependent on them. They have to be in the world but not of the world. They must stand firm for those things which clearly honour Jesus Christ.

Much PNG Culture is Little Changed

This leads me now to look at the statement which we often hear: 'the missionaries have spoiled our culture'. Two questions immediately come to mind. The first is, 'What is culture?' The second question is, 'What part of the culture have the missionaries spoiled?'

Culture can be broadly defined as 'our whole way of life'. This whole way of life is made up of religious, social, economic and political aspects. These four big areas of life include smaller ones, for example, language, ceremonies, social duties, the social structure which includes leadership, family, clans, tribes; carving, which includes tools, weapons, drums, figures. There is clothing, fishing, hunting, housing, gardening, legends, songs. There are regional beliefs, which [p. 67](#) include spirits, magic and sorcery. There are world-views which include our beliefs about the world and man.

In many of these areas very few changes have taken place. Most of these changes are for the good. When we look at hunting, very little change has taken place. Men still go

out into the bush to hunt. Instead of hunting with bows and arrows some use shotguns. Is this good or bad? What about gardening? The only change is that people use spades and steel axes instead of digging sticks or stone axes. Not many of us would be happy to go back to sticks and stone axes.

What about houses? In some places, especially in coastal areas, many houses are built of galvanised iron with sawn boards. In most of the highland areas people still build their houses from *kunai* grass and *pitpit* as they had always done before. No one can say that what the coastal people do is not cultural or that the highlanders must change their housing.

What about our social structures? Again, missionaries have not changed these patterns. We still have our traditional chiefs, we still live in tribes and clans in the villages as our fore-fathers lived.

What about our traditional songs? There have been changes in some areas. In other areas Christian nationals decided against traditional songs because some of these convey wrong thoughts and ideas to people. This kind of change is bound to take place. Christianity which is centred in Jesus Christ brings change into all areas of life, including the meaning of the words in the songs we sing. We cannot blame the missionaries for this. If anyone is to be blamed, the blame must rightly go to Christian nationals.

When we come to clothing we know that great changes have taken place that cannot be altered. I can clearly remember that up to the age of five or six years I was running around naked in our village. It was not until I started school that I had to learn to keep something on my body. Now I don't think I would feel comfortable without being appropriately dressed. I can also remember the great trouble my wife and I went to when we expected our first-born. Our children don't know what it means not to have clothes on. They would feel deeply hurt if someone told them to go to school naked or dressed in leaves, because neither is part of their culture.

When we look at our languages we become very conscious of the great contribution missionaries have made to preserve them. Thereby they preserve a very important part of our culture. But we also know languages change very quickly. It is not the missionary's fault that languages change.

What I have said so far appears to present missionaries as angels. I [p. 68](#) appear to be saying that missionaries made no mistakes or never spoiled our culture. Many overseas missionaries would readily agree that as foreigners they brought with them ideas and ways of life that are alien to Papua New Guineans. This is natural and very human. They have come to us, bringing the Gospel in the way understood by them. None of us can dissociate ourselves from the culture in which we grew up. European thought patterns are different.

Missionaries Brought Two Main Changes

I can think of at least two major areas in which missionaries are responsible for changes in the culture of our people. One of these was inevitable. The other one could have been avoided had the missionaries been more careful or more clear about their coming to Papua New Guinea.

First, the inevitable change. That has come whenever the Gospel is preached, regardless of the missionary's nationality or cultural background. Missionaries, as agents of the Gospel, did a great deal to change Melanesian 'spirituality'. The Gospel delivered many of our forefathers from superstition, magic and sorcery. The missionaries did not produce this change. They neither knew how nor possessed the power to bring about these changes. It is the Gospel that brought these changes into our society. Paul was clear about this when he said 'I have complete confidence in the

Gospel; it is God's power to save all who believe, first the Jews and also the Gentiles' ([Romans 1:16](#)). We need to distinguish between the messenger and the message. If we are unhappy about the change in our belief system then our blame should be directed to God, not to the missionaries.

Many of us who easily criticize missionaries would not want to return to the magic, sorcery, fear and superstition of our forefathers. Our ancestors used magic and sorcery to obtain power from beyond themselves to control and manipulate their destiny. The success of it depended greatly on the use of the right rituals and formulas. Christianity is far superior to the ways of our forefathers because it is centred in Jesus Christ, our living Lord and Saviour. He stands over and above all powers, rulers and spiritual authorities. We do not have to use special rituals or formulas to make contact with him. We can speak to him in any language and he will hear us. He hears us and knows our thoughts and words before we call on him because, 'in him we live and move and have our being' ([Acts 17:28](#), RSV).

The other change missionaries have brought is related to families tribes and clans being separated from each other. In Some of our [p. 69](#) villages different churches work in competition with one another. Instead of bringing unity and harmony to the village, division is introduced. This is not the Work of the Gospel, this is the work of men. This is not preaching Jesus Christ; it is preaching 'churchism' or denominationalism. In this way missionaries take their own names to villages, not Jesus' name. They go there to make followers for themselves rather than for Jesus Christ. If we must win people's confidence by a slight twist of the Gospel or by disregarding the good work done by others we cannot regard ourselves as Christians, we cannot clearly say we are here to serve Christ.

Now, missionaries are not the only ones deserving blame for this mistake, Some big troubles and divisions have been caused by Christian nationals. Some of us Christian nationals think that our particular denomination is the only one which preaches the truth. I say, let us be united and stop confusing our own people.

V THE CHURCH AND ITS MISSION

We have seen that Paul addressed Christians as 'the church of God' or 'the people of God' ([1 Cor. 1:1](#); [2 Cor. 1:2](#); [Phil. 1:1](#); [Col. 1:2](#)). He used these phrases to remind his readers of the one true God to whom they belong and of their responsibility to him. The word 'church' in most of Paul's letters is used to describe local congregations. All local congregations belong to God. God is personally responsible for every believer in a local congregation.

God has shown his responsibility for local congregations and believers by doing four specific things:

a. *God has made Jesus Christ Head of the Church*

In [Ephesians 1:21-23](#), Jesus Christ is described as the 'head of the Church'. Jesus Christ is not like the chairman or president of a meeting who sits at the head table, listens to all the arguments, tries to control the meeting and approves the motions. As 'head of the Church' Jesus Christ makes decisions by himself without consulting anyone. He is the source of the Church's strength, wisdom and righteousness ([1 Cor. 1:18, 23, 24, 30](#)). Because of who Jesus Christ is, the Church, which is his body, must carry out whatever he decides.

b. *God has made the Holy Spirit the Director of the Church*

The Holy Spirit is given to the Church to direct its work and witness ([1 Cor. 2:10-16](#)). The Holy Spirit does this by giving different spiritual gifts to different people ([1 Cor. 2:10, 11](#)). He reserves the absolute [p. 70](#) right in determining the type of gift each

Christian should receive ([1 Cor. 12:11](#)). It is the work of the Holy Spirit to teach Christians ([John 15:26](#); [1 Cor. 2:13–16](#)). The Holy Spirit's primary work is to glorify Jesus Christ ([John 16:12–15](#); [1 Cor. 12:3](#)).

c. *God has given His Word to Guide the Church*

God is responsible for the content of the Bible. He is the primary author of the Bible. His thoughts, his will, his plans are clearly set out in the Bible. The people of God are not asked to dream up messages or look for special signs to show them as to what part of the Bible is important to preach on. All of the Bible is important, all of it must be carefully taught and preached to the people.

d. *God has given Workers to Serve the Church*

Christians are God's gift to the Church, to do his work. Every Christian is therefore a gift to the Church and a member of the Church. Every Christian is saved to serve ([1 Cor. 3:5](#), [4:1](#), [12:28](#), [Eph. 4:11](#)).

Thus we see that God, not man, is the owner of the Church. The Church is responsible to carry out the mission of God. This means that if a local congregation is to be effective and fruitful to God it needs to keep a daily, living fellowship with him. Believers need to meet daily around the Word of God to receive instructions, encouragement, and fresh challenge.

The Church which lives in daily fellowship with God around his Word will continually know God's mission for the world. Since the Church belongs to God, sits under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, submits to the direction of the Holy Spirit and his Word, it becomes concerned with everything that concerns God. This concern of God is clearly stated by our Lord in [Luke 4:18–20](#). This passage tells us that the mission of the Church involves:

- bringing good news to the poor,
- bringing freedom to the captives,
- bringing sight to the blind,
- bringing the good news of eternal salvation to all.

This passage tells us that the Church's mission to the world involves the whole of man and not just part of him. The total Gospel must be presented to the total man for a total commitment to God. Thus the Church which is committed to Jesus Christ must busy itself at all levels of human need. [p. 71](#)

VI THE NEXT TEN YEARS

No one can accurately predict what the next ten years will bring. Whether our Lord returns or not, our main task is to keep busy until he comes. We should set certain targets to work toward. We must work and pray for we do not know the hour nor the day when our Lord will come. Let me suggest a few such targets:

i. *Discovering each other in Jesus Christ*

Let us remind ourselves again that the Church of Jesus Christ is bigger than the particular local congregation or Church group we belong to. We must work together to express the unity we have in Jesus Christ across all the different groups we represent. Working together means:

- effective use of the resources God has given to us,
- completion of work in shorter time,
- sharing of burdens.

ii. *Caring for the Christians*

In [1 Cor. 3:9](#) Paul uses the pictures of a garden and a building for the church. He said '... you are God's field. You are also God's building'. A garden and a building need constant attention. Many Christians in our churches and people of our nation are searching for directions for their lives. I suggest that we develop a series of small booklets of between [10](#) and 20 pages on such themes as:- The Christian Politician, The Christian Business Man, The Christian Accountant, The Christian Soldier, The Christian Family, The Christian Student; Caring for Vehicles, Caring for Coffee, Caring for the Soil, Caring for Animals.

iii. *Strengthening Church Leadership*

If we are serious about the life of our churches then we need to strengthen those who are pastors and leaders. We can do this by combining seminars on leadership and pastoral care at the provincial level. Suitable handbooks can be developed out of these seminars.

iv. *Reaching the Unreached*

The church must continually remind itself that its primary task is to go out and make disciples of all nations. We must plan for evangelistic meetings in every way we can. Whatever we do we must coordinate our activities properly. [p. 72](#)

CONCLUSION

Much of what is presented here represents the deep concerns of my own heart. There is much I have not touched on, but I present this in the hope that, whether you agree or disagree with me, it will spark a response in you, and further thought and discussion will take place as a result.

Rev. Joshua Daimoi is Principal-elect of the Christian Leaders Training College, Western Highlands, Papua New Guinea. [p. 73](#)

Witness of a Suffering Church: The Chinese Experience

Jonathan Chao

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The author argues that suffering is central to the theological and missiological understanding of the Church. He traces the role of suffering in the experience of the Church in China since 1949 and pinpoints the years of revival and unbelievable Church growth. However, the article raises a number of important issues that need further elucidation. A wider definition of suffering is needed. Is it restricted to constraints imposed by an anti-Christian society or are there other realms of suffering experienced by those who live in affluent, free but morally corrupt societies? Is the dichotomy between the institutional church and the house church movement essential to the nature of the Church or is it

contextual? Does the failure of the Church worldwide to learn from the China experience mean that it is not possible to prepare one's own Church for times of persecution?
(Editor)

On the eve of his betrayal, Jesus said to his disciples: 'In the world you have tribulations; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world ([John 16:33](#)). His disciples began to understand this truth most concretely after Pentecost. Paul, who once persecuted the church, authenticated his apostleship through the marks of his suffering ([2 Cor. 11:22-29](#)). Therefore, he could write to the Philippians: 'For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict which you saw and now hear to be mine' ([Phil. 2:29](#)).

Throughout the history of the Christian church, suffering has been an integral part of her life and work. In fact, the history of the church can best be understood through the history of her suffering. For it was in her suffering that the spiritual nature of the church has been made most manifest. In her suffering the church bore witness to the fact that she belongs to Christ, that she is destined for glory, and to the truth that no one can snatch her out of the bosom of her husband-lord, Christ Jesus. In the modern era this fact has been most vividly borne out by the church under Communist rule. It is not possible for me to give an overall analysis of all churches struggling under socialism, but the Chinese experience is one remarkable example with which I am familiar, and so I will briefly analyze the witness of the suffering church in the People's Republic of China. I will do so by [p. 74](#)

1. describing the historical shape of the suffering church in China during 1949–1983,
2. presenting the church's self-understanding of the meaning of suffering,
3. pointing to the witness of the Chinese church as a suffering church, and
4. suggesting some theological and missiological implications from the Chinese experience.

I HISTORICAL SHAPE OF A SUFFERING CHURCH

The history of the Christian church in China since 1949 may be divided into five periods which are determined by China's major political developments. When interpreted theologically, these five stages of the church's experience also reflect the suffering, death, resurrection of Jesus and the Pentecostal gift of the Spirit.

Church under Trial (1949–1958)

During the first nine years of Chinese Communist take-over, the Protestant church was brought under the full control of the state. This was done through the formation and work of the Three-self Patriotic Movement, a 'mass organization' created under the directives of the party to implement its religious policy among Protestant Christians.

The Party's policy was, and still is, to cut off the relationship between the church in China and the church universal on the ground that Christianity has been used by the capitalist imperialists to conduct cultural aggression. Thus to make the Chinese Church totally self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating was the declared aim of this Party-directed organization. But the real intent was to isolate the Chinese church from all of her former foreign influences. This attempt at separating the Chinese church from foreign imperialists was accomplished by (1) expelling foreign missionaries from China, (2) holding accusation meetings against all former missionaries and Chinese pastors who were at one time or another connected with foreign governments or the

Kuomintang or who were unfriendly to the Communist revolutionary cause. In this process mission schools, hospitals, and church boards were closed down or taken over. Many church leaders were accused publicly of imperialist crimes.

A second aspect of Chinese Communist religious policy was to make religious groups declare their support for the party and the new China. Early on July 28, 1950 a Christian manifesto was published by the first [p. 75](#) convenors of the Three-self Movement. Thereafter, all Chinese pastors and para-church leaders were required to sign this document to demonstrate their patriotism. Those who refused to sign it were condemned as anti-revolutionaries, and most of them were put into prison during 1955 and again in 1958. The Chinese Church throughout the land came under trial. The test imposed on all church leaders was whether to support the TSPM or not. Those who declared their support for the TSPM were considered patriotic, those who refused were declared non-patriotic and anti-revolutionary. Under such pressure most church leaders gave in and submitted themselves to political reeducation conducted by the officials of the TSPM. There were some who refused to bow down to the TSPM and even declared their opposition to such politicizing pressure. In that situation not a few Judases appeared. To save their skin, they betrayed their fellow Christian workers or believers. Those who were faithful to Christ were often left to suffer in their loneliness, and even their best friends, relatives, and co-workers forsook them.

Church Abandoned and Suppressed (1958–1966)

After 1958, Christianity in China existed on two levels: a few TSPM churches opened for public worship and closely supervised by the State through the Religious Affairs Bureau and the TSPM on the upper level, and small underground house churches meeting clandestinely on the lower level. The open TSPM churches could not do things according to the demands of Scripture, and the underground house churches could not do things openly according to their conscience. Such was the nature of things when Chinese Communist religious policy was operating normally. House church activities were considered illegal, and violators were prosecuted and often condemned to imprisonment. Those who were arrested were sent to reform camps where they were forced to do hard labour, forbidden to have visitors, and deprived of the privilege of Bible reading. They subsisted on a poor diet. Isolated from their friends and relatives, they suffered ten to twenty years of seemingly endless internment. A few Christians were roomed together with other believers in prison, but most learned to witness for Christ amongst their fellow prisoners with the result that secret prison fellowships emerged.

The families that these Christian prisoners left behind suffered similar isolation and hardship. Deprived of their menfolk and without income, wives and children of the imprisoned found themselves destitute. Often they were driven out of their parish houses when their [p. 76](#) churches were taken over by the State. In addition to these financial and physical hardships, their friends and relatives would shy away from contact with them because they were labelled as 'anti-revolutionary families'. Under such situations of political and social ostracism, these families suffered hardships in extreme isolation. Only those who truly loved the Lord would stretch out a helping hand to share their meagre resources with them, at great political risk of becoming implicated. It was a time of testing the genuineness of Christian love.

Church under Suffering and Death (1966–1976)

In August 1966, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution broke out at Mao's instigation. Young radical Red Guards sprang up and rampaged all over China. Armed with the little

red book and encouraged by the Chairman, they went out to destroy old ideologies, old customs, old ideas, and old systems, including the party structure and state machinery. They stormed city halls, police headquarters and university administration buildings and publicly humiliated and beat up party revisionists, intellectuals, and anyone whom they considered not totally 'proletarian'. In the sphere of religion, they destroyed temples, monasteries, and stormed the few churches that remained. They searched practically every believer's home, looking for Bibles, hymnals, and every other type of Christian literature they could find in order to confiscate or burn them. In Amoy, southeast China, the Red Guards gathered all the Bibles that they could find, piled them into a great heap in the public square, and set fire to them. Believers were rounded up and forced to kneel in front of that pillar of fire. in those days, both Christians from secret house churches and TSPM leaders were attacked, publicly 'struggled against', and forced to parade in the streets. Some of the believers were literally beaten to death. Others suffered permanent paralysis. Not a few house church leaders who secretly propagated the Gospel were arrested and sent to labour camps where they were further interrogated and forced to do hard labour.

After the first wave of the Cultural Revolution attack, all traces of visible Christian activities were removed from the face of Chinese society. China became truly what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called, 'a religionless society'. The institutional church under the Three-self Patriotic Movement was destroyed. All Christians had to go through the baptism of suffering and humiliation. For a while even clandestine house church activities were suspended. The church in China was dead and buried. [p. 77](#)

By 1958 all churches and Christian activities were brought under the tight control of the state through the TSPM. As the shepherds were attacked, the flock scattered. Throughout the country, churches were closed down in the name of unification. Pastors who declared their support for the TSPM and the State were still removed from their ministerial positions. They had to engage in constant political studies until the situation was so unbearable that they themselves requested to work in the factories or on the farms.

During this initial period, the Chinese church was severely tried by, and before, a court of atheists. The church was abused and humiliated; arrests and imprisonments were the order of the day. Faithful pastors and believers were literally like sheep before their shearers; they were utterly powerless and helpless, and God let them suffer in their desolation. It was as if God had abandoned them.

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But the glory of God did not depart from his people in China. His Spirit overshadowed them. Out of a valley of dry bones, a great spiritual p. 79 army began to rise up. It was a slow process which began after the initial waves of attack during 1966–1969. A few servants of God, moved by the situation of spiritual desolation that characterized the church, began to pray for a revival. They started to search for every believer and urged those they found to rise up from their fears and to call upon the name of the Lord. Twos and threes began to meet secretly to pray and to encourage each other with God's word. Gradually these small groups grew into Spirit-filled house churches. Deprived of ministerial leadership, lay leaders rose up to lead prayer meetings and to minister to a growing number of God's people. The Spirit of God was at work all over China, silently but surely house churches sprang up in every city, town, and countless number of villages. Out of suffering and death, a new Chinese church was born.

Church Experiencing the Power of the Resurrection (1976–1980)

After the death of Mao Tse-tung and the arrest of the 'Gang of Four' headed by his widow Chiang Ching in 1976, China began to change. Politically China moved away from Mao's radical leftist line of continuous revolution to a new programme of socialist modernization, which implied a more open attitude toward the West. 1976–1980 was an era of transition from the rule of Hua Kuo-feng, Mao's designated heir, to the rise of Teng Hsiao-p'ing, China's present strong man. By the end of 1980, Teng's power was well established. During the first two years of the transition (1976–1978), Chinese society began to deice, and underground house churches began to surface into semi-clandestine activities. Since March 1979, the Chinese Communist Party began to restore its religious policy of limited toleration under the united front policy, namely, a policy of friendly cooperation with ideological enemies in order to enlist the support of the religious mass for the Four Modernizations programme. This was followed by the restoration of the Three-self Patriotic Movement in August 1979 and the re-opening of churches under the TSPM in the large cities. The TSPM was not fully reconstituted on the national level until October 1980, when it held its third national conference in Nanking. Thus during 1979–1980 the house church movement enjoyed a short period of unprecedented freedom, especially in the countryside. Politically, Chinese Communist cadres adopted a laissez-faire attitude, and religiously, the TSPM was not yet fully organized to implement control.

It was during this period of power transition before the control apparatus was restored that the house church movement grew in size and number. The church that suffered so long was able to enjoy a [p. 80](#) temporary season of peace, and the people of God took advantage of this unusual season of grace to preach the Gospel. As the Spirit of God descended upon them, the people of God freely experienced the power of Christ's resurrection on a large scale. God worked signs and miracles among them: the sick were healed after much prayer, demons were exorcised in Jesus' name, even the dead were raised up. Witnessing the saving power of Christ, even atheistic Communist party and Youth League members believed. Christians in China called 1978–1980 a period of revival.

Church in Mission and in Spiritual Conflict (1980–1983)

In December 1980, the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee held a work conference to evaluate the progress of the four modernization programmes and to set new agendas after the dismissal of Hua Kuo-feng. Economically, the government sought to restore centralized planning and control. Politically, Teng Hsiao-p'ing restored political studies in all spheres of Chinese organized life. The party's new leadership was determined to eliminate those officials who had come to power during the Cultural Revolution and to re-shape the party with new ideals represented by the 'four insistences': (1) insistence on the ideology of Marxism, Leninism and the thought of Mao Tse-tung; (2) insistence on the dictatorship of the proletariat; (3) insistence on the leadership of the Chinese Communist party; and (4) insistence on walking the path of socialism. The spirit of the four insistences dominated the new constitutional revision of 1982 and also the Twelfth Party Congress (Sept. 1–12, 1982).

This tightening of political control, since early 1981, found its expression in the increased control of the Religious Affairs Bureau and the TSPM over house activities. As the TSPM became more organized, establishing branches at provincial and county levels, house church activities in both cities and villages were soon brought under control. Christians are now being urged to worship only in churches designated by the TSPM, and only designated pastors are allowed to preach, doing so only within designated districts. Under this new policy of 'three designates' (since Sept. 1982), house church

leaders are forbidden to do itinerant preaching, and churches not recognized by the TSPM were told to close down.

Yet the church of God, having enjoyed a season of revival, became bolder than ever to preach the word in season and out of season. As a result, many are turning to Christ, and the number of Christians in China has grown from less than one million in 1949 to nearly 50 million [p. 81](#) today. Desirous to see the whole nation turn to Christ, many house churches have organized evangelistic teams to do cross-country and provincial missions. These evangelistic outreaches have run into direct conflict with the restored religious policy of containing Christian activities within the four walls of the TSPM churches. As a result, many itinerant preachers have been arrested or are on the run because their names are on the arrest list. House churches in the cities are driven underground again, and those in the countryside are constantly being harassed. Those who continue to hold meetings are being arrested, beaten, and put into prison. After a short breathing space, the church in China is undergoing renewed persecution and suffering again. It is anticipated that in the days to come things will most likely get worse.

Hence the history of the church in China since 1949 has been a history of sufferings. Yet by going through different stages of suffering, the church in China has been transformed from a timid, 'foreign-coloured' institutional church into a bold, indigenous, institutionless church, and it has been changed from a dependent 'mission church' to an independent 'missionary church'. It is a church that has gone through the 'steps of the cross', following the footsteps of her Lord: betrayal, trial, humiliation, abandonment, suffering, death, burial, resurrection, and the gift of the Spirit. The historical shape of the suffering church in China indeed resembles the Face of the Servant of the Lord who suffered for her.

II CHURCH'S SELF-UNDERSTANDING OF SUFFERING

How, then, do Christians in China interpret the meaning of their suffering? In the 1950s suffering came upon them as a surprise. They were utterly unprepared for it. Even during the hey-day of the Cultural Revolution (1966–69), many Christians were perplexed by the extremities of their suffering. They could not help but ask: 'How long, O Lord, do we have to suffer? Has thou forsaken us in thy wrath?' Not until they were released from prison and restored to Christian fellowship during 1978–1980 did they begin to understand the meaning of their suffering. Some, of course, had already come to see the significance of their suffering during their imprisonment. From the many interviews that I have conducted with Christians from China and later inside China, especially those faithful servants of God who had suffered long years of imprisonment, I have gathered the following streams of their reflective thinking on why God allowed the church in China to suffer.

Suffering as God's Cleansing Agency

Most house church leaders, including some pastors in the TSPM [p. 82](#) churches, believe that suffering has been used of God as an agency for the cleansing of the Chinese church.

The institutional Protestant church founded by foreign missions from the mid-nineteenth century was, until 1949, a fragmented denominational church which reflected all the idiosyncrasies of Western individualism characterized by denominational divisions. Under the denominational structure, there was a divisive spirit at work which Chinese Christians found repulsive. Through the hands of the Three-self movement, denominationalism was for all practical purposes, eliminated.

The Chinese Protestant church before the 'liberation' was, by and large, a dependent church, a church which was dependent upon foreign financial support, leadership, and even ideas. This was partially due to an historical formation of dependency of the Chinese ministry under foreign missions, and partly due to the built-in structure of missionary control, especially through the 'employment system'. By the cutting off of the Chinese church from the Western churches and mission societies, she had learned to depend solely upon God. Suffering under persecution intensified that need to develop a total dependence upon God.

Since the early 1920s, the Church in China was plagued with the disease of theological liberalism which was transmitted to China through missionaries from the mainline denominations. The battle of theological controversy between the liberals and the fundamentalists was extended onto Chinese soil, and the Chinese church suffered many casualties. One good example of such casualties is the betrayal of fundamentalist pastors by liberal ministers when political pressure was put upon the church in the 1950s. By going through suffering in the 1950s and again in the late 1960s, Chinese Christians and pastors, both fundamentalists and liberals, had to reflect on what they really believed, and in the process re-adjust their theological priorities. Pastors and believers alike experienced a deepening of their faith and were able to sort out the essentials of faith which endures and the nonessentials which could be cast out.

The church in China prior to 1950 was a church dominated by professional clericalism. The institutional church was led by a group of full-time professional staff: missionaries, pastors, evangelists and Bible-women. Very few lay people took part in the ministry. The removal of ministerial leadership from the suffering church resulted in the formation of a people's church, commonly known as 'house churches' where 'body ministry' received its full development. The people of God were freed from their earlier dependence on ministers, while the [p. 83](#) ministers in prison were freed from their dependence on foreign missionaries. More than that, they had to learn to abandon their earlier status of honour and to accept humiliation and disgrace as concomitants of ministry. One evangelist said that through suffering he had come to see that all his earlier ministerial accomplishments were nothing but hay and stubble. Through suffering he had come to gain a new understanding of what the Christian ministry is all about: not to follow (church) traditions of men, but to do the work of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The church in China used to have many 'tares'. For many joined the church for material benefits: free medicine, free education, free assistance for studying abroad, or relief in times of natural disasters. They were called 'rice Christians'. It was a church of social convenience, a church of mercy without discipline, that offered a gospel of cheap grace. But the tightening pressure of persecution in the 1950s quickly separated the wheat from the tares, and the church was cleansed of such tares. Suffering soon separated the true disciples from the Judases.

So today most church leaders believe that the church in China has been thoroughly cleansed from these and many other evils. For this they thank God, even though it was painful for them to go through such prolonged suffering themselves.

Suffering as Training for Christian Maturity

Christians in China also see a positive aspect, in suffering, namely, that it has been used of God to test believers in the genuineness of their faith, hope and love, and to train them unto greater Christian maturity.

Christians in China feel that they were most severely tested in the following points:

1. To continue to believe in Jesus upon pain of suffering, imprisonment, and possibly death, or to recant their faith under duress. This type of severe testing came during the early days of the Cultural Revolution. One faithful Catholic was buried up to his neck. The question posed to him by a red guard was: 'If you continue to believe in your Jesus, I'll put a bullet into your head. If you stop believing in Jesus, I'll let you out. Which do you choose?' It was reported that he chose the former. The temptation was to confess Jesus in one's heart and to deny him verbally, hoping that 'God will understand'. But the demand of Jesus was to confess him publicly. Through suffering and persecution professing Chinese Christians came to [p. 84](#) discover whether their faith was real or just a matter of social or economic expediency. Once they had gone through such testing, they became more assured of their faith and treasured it more dearly.

2. To speak the truth or to bear false witness against one's fellow believers when put under pressure such as that staged during 'people's court' proceedings. The choice was to denounce an innocent brother and thus save one's skin or to speak the truth and face the consequence of self-incrimination, especially when the accused had already been charged as anti-revolutionary. Christians were encouraged to respond to the demand for incriminating information against others so as to receive lighter sentences for themselves in trial situations. The promise of food in a situation of starvation during imprisonment can also move one to betray another. It was very tempting, therefore, to save oneself at the expense of others. The test was to love or to betray. Not a few Christians played the part of Judas, while others came to understand the practical meaning of love.

3. To persist in hope or to give up for a quicker release. Christians who spent ten or more years in prison say that it was easier to die for Christ than to keep on hoping in situations of utter despair. Doubts about the reality and the faithfulness of God hounded them: 'Does God really care?' 'Is He really there seeing all that I am going through?' 'Am I believing in a real God or am I suffering just for a set of ideas?' In such situations, their hope in the promise of an eternal life was severely tested. Only the indwelling and inward testimony of the Holy Spirit could give them strength to maintain their faith and hope in a situation of hopelessness. Amazingly, it was often because they went through such hopelessness that they came to understand the reality of the Christian hope which gave them life, peace and joy.

4. To be loyal to Christ or to yield to Caesar's demands in situations of conflict. This testing is going on right now as the TSPM implements the Party's religious policy. Some Christian leaders, in spite of their earlier suffering, are giving in again and accepting a limited but legitimized ministry offered by the TSPM. Others are making a decided choice of 'obeying God rather than man' when they are forbidden to preach the Gospel freely. It is a test of lordship; Who is lord: Christ or Caesar?

The Christians in China, having experienced these facets of severe testing, have come to know how genuine are their faith, love, and hope. These experiences of suffering have trained them to grow in Christian maturity in the most cardinal elements of the Christian faith and life. [p. 85](#)

Suffering as Training in Obedience

Obedience is a hard lesson to learn. The human will is prone to follow its own promptings rather than those of the Holy Spirit. We asked one Chinese pastor who suffered fourteen years of imprisonment: 'What did you learn from such experience?' He replied: 'I learned obedience through suffering.' As Jesus learned obedience through the things that he suffered, so many Chinese Christians have come to learn to submit their

will to God's. For in prison situations, one experiences a deprivation of freedom, which is tantamount to a denial of one's will. Christians in prison had to accept the reality of their helplessness and learn to abandon themselves solely to the mercy of God. Such self-abandonment opens the way to a life of grace that flows from the love of God.

Christians in China testify that suffering in the flesh has enabled them to experience the power of God in overcoming the power of sin in them (cf. [1 Peter 4:1-2](#)). One house church leader in central China was formerly plagued with the sins of adultery and of stealing. After he became a Christian he still felt the urge to fall back into these sins. Later he was imprisoned for preaching the Gospel, and his prison experience cured him of the urge to lust after women and of his desire for stealing.

Suffering in Experiencing Union with Christ

1. Believers in China testify that suffering has enabled them to understand that they are 'called not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for him' ([Phil. 1:29](#)). The Living Bible translated this passage as: 'it is given to us as a privilege to suffer for him'.

2. Christians in China have come to understand that they are called to share the suffering of Christ and bear his disgrace ([1 Pet. 4:12-13](#); [Heb. 13:12-13](#)). In sharing the disgrace of Christ, Chinese Christians have come to understand that they belong to Christ and must follow the way of the cross, i.e. self-denial and possibly dying for Christ. It was through their participation in the fellowship of his suffering that they came to understand the meaning of union with the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ. They came to experience the power of Christ's resurrection when, through the Holy Spirit, they overcame the power of sin in their lives, when they overcame demonic power in exorcism, and when they saw God delivering them from Satanic power at work through their oppressors.

3. Experiencing the power of the resurrection has enabled Chinese believers to experience more fully the fruits of the Holy Spirit in their [p. 86](#) lives: love, peace, joy, longsuffering, tenderness, kindness, gentleness, forgiveness, boldness, etc., so that their lives shine more brilliantly in the midst of gloom and human despair.

4. Experiencing union with Christ's death and resurrection through suffering has enabled Chinese Christians to develop an intense love for Christ, a clearer vision of God, and a sure hope for the incorruptible inheritance which God has in store for them.

5. Longing for an early union with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the midst of endless suffering has produced in them an intense hope for the imminent return of Christ. Through their hope we are enabled to understand how Christians in the early church hoped for an early return of Christ.

Thus, Christians in China interpret the last thirty-four years of prolonged suffering as a gift of God's profound grace to the Chinese church in cleansing her from her impurities, in testing the genuineness of their faith and loyalty, in training them for obedience and progress unto greater maturity, and in enabling them to gain a deeper experience with Christ.

III WITNESS OF THE SUFFERING CHURCH

How, then, shall we summarize the witness of the Chinese suffering Church? To whom did they bear witness? I think they bore witness to themselves and to the churches worldwide through their self-understanding of suffering described above. But equally important is the witness they bore on Christ's behalf to the Chinese people and to an unbelieving state in the following ways:

The Suffering Church in China has borne witness to the Chinese people in all walks of life of the reality of the Christian faith so that they have come to realize that Christians have something which they lack, something which they desire to have for themselves.

It was reported that Mrs. Wang Ming-tao helped many fellow prisoners who were sick, and her love testified to the grace of God. Fellow prisoners said that she was different from the rest, and this difference caused many to ask her how to have her faith. Thus the reality of the Christian faith as a supernatural power which gives life and hope to Christians in the midst of common human despair was most concretely recognized by fellow prisoners.

The Suffering Church in China has borne witness to an atheistic state of the indestructibility of the Christian church as a spiritual community. p. 87

The Party has come to realize more than ever that coercive measures not only fail to eliminate the church, but even contribute to her growth. The resiliency of the Christian church, in spite of repeated persecution and utter isolation, is bearing witness to the fact that the Christian faith is capable of growth even when totally cut off from 'Western imperialists.' The vitality and rapid growth of the church in China has negated all communist theories of religion as a form of superstition which would die out as human society progresses in science and socialism.

The suffering church in China has borne witness to the Chinese people of the supernatural power of God, especially through signs and miracles, through the conversion of Party and youth league members, and through the perseverance of the saints and God's preservation of them.

What seemed scientifically impossible, such as terminally ill cancer patients being healed, became possible through divine intervention in response to the church's prayers. What seemed ideologically impossible became a common reality when party members renounced their political privileges to accept a second class citizenship as Christians.

The Suffering Church in China has borne witness to the difference of Christian life style.

Through the practice of truth in a society of falsehood, Christians have demonstrated what is authentic existence. Through the practice of love in a society of hatred, Christians have demonstrated the superiority of the Christian way to the Marxist ceaseless struggle ethic. Through the establishment of authentic communities of love (house churches) in a society of human alienation, Christians have demonstrated the possibility of an authentic common life in Christ Jesus. Through the exercise of faith and hope in situations of disillusionment and despair, Christians have demonstrated the life-giving character of the Christian faith. All these Christian manifestation, truth, love, hope and authentic community are rare commodities in a society of endless class struggle. It is these spiritual attributes of the Christian Church which are attracting many non-Christians to seek after the Christ in whom Christians believe.

IV THEOLOGICAL AND MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

What can the church universal learn from the experiences of the suffering church? What theological and missiological implications can we draw from the Chinese experience? P.

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Theological Implications

The experiences of suffering and what suffering has done to churches under communism, show us that suffering for Christ's sake is central to the growth of Christian life and of the church. This implies that the New Testament teaching on the believers sharing the suffering of Christ and of the place of suffering in the process of sanctification ought to be given more attention in our theological discussions, especially in the doctrine of the Christian life. Some questions need to be asked in this regard.

1. If it was necessary for Jesus to suffer in order to obtain salvation for us ([Luke 24:26](#); [Heb. 2:10](#)), and he called us to follow in his footsteps ([1 Pet. 2:21](#); [Heb. 13:12-13](#)), then is suffering for Christ a basic necessity for us or a matter of voluntary choice? How do we feel with cases of obvious Christian escape from suffering theologically and pastorally? If suffering is an essential part of Christian union with Christ, which he intends us to experience, how do we explain the relative lack of suffering in churches in the rest of the world?

2. If suffering is the gateway to glory as it was for Jesus ([Luke 24:26](#)) and it is the pathway that leads us to the sharing of his glory ([1 Pet. 4:12-13](#)), has the church in the West and the rest of the 'free world' been deprived of a training course on the way to glory? Has the ministry in the free world failed to point people in the direction of glory?

3. In view of these considerations how should we understand the place of suffering in the training of discipleship? What place should suffering occupy in the *loci* of systematic theology and in pastoral theology?

Missiological Implications

1. The experience of the church in China has demonstrated that suffering has been one of the important factors contributing to the miraculous growth of the church in China. The testimonies of faithfulness to Christ under situations of suffering on the part of Chinese pastors in the 1950s and again in the late 1960s have inspired their flock to follow their example of being faithful to Christ. When these old preachers were released from prison during 1978-1980, their spiritual survival and testimonies further stimulated the young generation of believers to work harder for the Lord. This matter of faithfulness as a factor contributing to church growth is further testified to by the Korean experience in a positive way and by the Japanese experience in a negative manner.

2. Furthermore, the Chinese experience has also testified to the fact [p. 89](#) that wherever the seed of the Gospel was sown, whether by missionaries or by Chinese evangelists, there house churches flourished and multiplied manifold. Persecution and suffering, deprivation of missionary or ministerial leadership and financial assistance did not result in the death of a young church like China but, as the seed died, in due time it brought forth fruit. This should give encouragement to missionaries that their work when done faithfully in the name of Christ shall bear fruit in due time, even though they might not see the results of their labours. Neither should they fear when God allows an atheistic state to remove them from their work.

3. If suffering is such an important factor in church growth, what should be its place in the missiology of church growth? There is a spiritual dimension to church growth which its students can explore from the experiences of suffering churches.

4. The churches worldwide have always demonstrated a keen interest in the welfare of the suffering church. Likewise, the churches in 'restricted areas' are also anxious to sustain a spiritual relationship with churches 'outside.' This desire for fellowship points to the need to develop a theology, a *communio sanctorum*, in relation to suffering churches, a theology that can give guidance to Christians, churches and para-church organizations which are engaged in ministry to churches under restriction. Secondly,

there needs to be developed a missiological structure for ministering to churches under suffering and for them to minister to churches 'outside.' Thirdly, the doctrine of *communio sanctorum* implies a sharing of spiritual, human, and material resources with the suffering church.

Concluding Remarks

Last year, an American Bible school student came to our Centre for a month's summer internship. Before he left America, he told a friend how Christians in China were suffering. His friend responded: 'If God loves the Chinese church so much, why did he allow her to suffer so much and for so long?' This youth had no answer. When he was in Hong Kong he made several trips to China and had occasion to have fellowship with house church leaders who had gone through much suffering and were zealously doing the work of evangelism. 'Now I have the answer to my friend's question,' he told me, 'I am going to reply thus to his question: "If God loves the American church so much, why doesn't He allow us to suffer so that our churches might be purified, our faith strengthened, and our relationship with Christ deepened to serve Him wholeheartedly?".

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Role of the Urban Church: A Black South African Perspective

Bonganjalo Goba

INTRODUCTION

One of the apparent weaknesses of theological enterprise in South Africa is the lack of interdisciplinary approach to the study of theology and in the life of the church. For many the notion of social science—particularly in the Christian community—is something which belongs to the profane secular world, which has no relevance to problems confronting the church. Most recent studies which have been concerned with the growth of Christianity, particularly among African people in South Africa, have been conducted by anthropologists whose orientation lacks a theological interpretation, with a few exceptions like Oosthuizen, who in his book *Post Christianity in Africa* attempts to relate the disciplines of theology and anthropology.

In this essay I will explore theological and sociological considerations regarding the role of the urban church—an attempt to develop an ecclesiology which is informed by both theological and sociological perspectives. It is not my intention to provide a theory for urban church research, although theoretical conceptualizations will emerge from what I say. Let me emphasize at this point that I believe the urban church has a unique role to play in urban areas. But it continues to be confronted by many problems—problems which arise from the peculiar pressures of city life, such as the emergence of

secularization, and whoever wants to deal with these problems must be informed by theological and sociological perspectives. The absence of such perspectives will lead to a truncated understanding of the nature and role of the church in the urban situation.

I am not here concerned with what is known as industrial mission, although that may be related to the topic. I am interested in a theological self-understanding of the church in the urban situation which takes seriously sociological implications. This approach raises, perhaps, the critical question of the relation between theology and sociology. Dr. Schroeder has identified several approaches to this problem:

Considered formally four broad approaches to the relation between theology and sociology are possible. Two of the formulations make distinctions between various disciplines; two argue for a basic unity of sciences. One of the latter usually distinguishes between science and the area of non-science, including theology. Advocates of the unity of sciences may focus upon the coherence and universality of the components involved in experience, or upon the underlying fundamental elements which give rise to everything else. Those who argue for the multiplicity p. 91 of sciences may focus either upon the presence of different subject matters or upon the perspective of different observers.¹

As it will be clear in the following sections, my own perspective will fall into the category of the unity of science because of my conception of the human sciences especially as a quest of a systematic self-understanding of problems that confront hum an existence—with an emphasis in this particular case on a dialogical relationship between theology and sociology.

The other important aspect which I will explore is the role of the urban church in the South African socio-political context from a black perspective. It is therefore my intention to deal, though not in great detail, with the political structures of Apartheid, particularly as they relate to the black churches in the urban situation, bringing to bear on this my own personal experience as a black minister who has served churches near both Johannesburg and Cape Town, and the experience of being a victim of racial oppression.

I DIALOGICAL RELATION BETWEEN THEOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY

The Church is first and foremost the *laos*, the people of God, called into being by Jesus Christ to participate in the liberating activity of God in the world. It is a fellowship—a covenant relationship between God and believers whose lives seek to manifest faith in Jesus Christ. The Church is also a voluntary religious organization existing in a social context. In this sense it is a social institution generated by the interaction among a plurality of believers with each other for the purpose of seeking a religious meaning for their existence in informing and guiding their daily socio-political involvements and actions in society. This definition of the church, as a *laos* and social institution participating in the liberating praxis of the gospel of Jesus Christ enables us to understand the nature and role of the church, particularly in the urban situation. Robert Lee makes this point clear:

Understanding the nature and the purpose of the church is a fundamental task. No matter how astutely the urban churchman may comprehend the sociological pressures in a community, the varieties of religious groups, the process of conflict and co-operation, he is

¹ W. Schroeder, *Cognitive Structures and Religious Research*, (Michigan State University Press, 1970), p. 11. This section is very useful in sorting out the relation of theology to sociology.

*ultimately driven to the theological question: what is the significance and the mission of the church?*² p. 92

This is the critical question to examine in this section, taking into account both theological and sociological assumptions, particularly as they relate to the African ethos that is the unique expression of African city life in contrast to the typical African traditional ethos. The process of urbanization in South Africa has in many ways had a tremendous impact on the cultural values of African people, Such as the emergence of a western life style with traits of individualism, and above all the partial desacralization of traditional forms of religious life. As John Mbiti puts it:

*Modern change is clearly evident almost everywhere and at least on the conscious level. But the subconscious depths of African societies still exert a great influence upon individuals and communities, even if they are no longer the only final sources of reference and identity. With the undermining of traditional solidarity has come the new search of values, identity and security which, for both the individual and his community were satisfactorily supplied or assured by a deeply religious background.*³

The church is *laos*, the people of God, participating in the praxis of the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ. She has a particular *sitz im leben*, a particular theological contextual stance. This is also true of the African church, particularly the African independent churches. The church as institution as well as a fellowship is a product of western missionary activity and reflects western ecclesiastical structures but with a different religiosity which has its roots in African traditional religion. Georges Gurvitch makes a relevant observation:

*As social frameworks of knowledge, churches always depend firstly on the nature of their revealed dogmas, their beliefs and the rites and practices in which their members participate; secondly, they depend on the strength of the mystical communions that they contain; and finally, they rest on the structure and organizations that correspond to their dogmas, beliefs and rites and practices.*⁴

African churches in many ways are different from typical western churches. While they incorporate in their teaching western Christian tradition, they also reflect the influence of African traditional beliefs. (Here I am referring particularly to the African independent churches and some exceptional cases among the mainline protestant churches). The following characterization of these churches will make this clear: i) They tend to be eclectic in the appropriation of western Christian tradition; hence they have been falsely accused of being syncretistic. ii) Leadership is mainly charismatic in the Weberian sense and also based on African traditional roles of an African chief (e.g. leadership role inherited). iii) They have a deep sense of community life and reflect certain aspects of the African extended family and kinship structure and an emphasis on faith healing and the work of the Holy Spirit—spirit possession. iv) Politically they tend to espouse African nationalism while some are apolitical. (This is also true of the mainline African protestant churches). v) The other important aspect is that these churches transcend the so-called tribal loyalties and differences. As Leo Kuper puts it:

The churches and their subsidiary organizations provide an important area of association for urban Africans, promoting contact among strangers, and transcending

² Robert Lee (ed.), *Cities and Churches* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, n.d.) p.329.

³ John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1970), p.344.

⁴ Georges Gurvitch, *Social Frameworks of Knowledge* (New York: Harper & Raw, 1971), p.79.

*tribal and class differences, though these may emerge in separate ceremonies and churches for different linguistic groups.*⁵

The important point I am trying to make here is that African churches particularly in urban situations are unique in that they combine, or in them we see the synthesis of, Western ecclesiastical structures and African traditional understanding of community life characterized by aspects of the African kinship system. The church as a people of God called to participate in the liberating ministry of Jesus Christ is also a social community which tries to cater to the needs of individuals and groups within society. These churches, in spite of their inherent weaknesses which I will discuss later, reflect the social milieu in which they exist. They are in a sense the emerging African urban church.

II BLACK URBAN CHURCH

It is difficult to find a suitable typology for the African urban churches, as they reflect a spiritual as well as an organizational pluralism. One, I believe, would find in varying degrees some typological aspects in them which J. W. Fernandez suggests in dealing with African religious movements:

*We may now locate the four types of religious movements proposed earlier in relation to our bi-polar continua. Nativistic movements are those oriented towards a traditional symbolism, which they manipulate expressively. Messianic movements generally employ an acculturated symbolism, which despite their acceptance of historic time they manipulate expressively, conjuring up millennial satisfacts. Separatist p. 94 movements employ an acculturated symbolism, which they tend to manipulate instrumentally. Reformatory movements find their base in a traditional orientation, with which, because of their instrumental orientation, they deliberately and creatively combine an acculturated symbolism.*⁶

As I have already indicated, there is no single typology but a variety of typological orientations. However one significant aspect is that African urban churches, because of the impact of city life, are an important focal point of the African city community, as they provide an atmosphere of fellowship which one misses in many civic centres and provide facilities which may not be available in certain urban communities. They are also important in that they nurture and develop the spiritual life of the community, giving it a sense of purpose in a situation of oppression.

Having discussed some of the aspects of the African urban churches, I want to show that like other institutions in urban societies, these churches are undergoing changes owing to the process and impact of urbanization. By urbanization here I mean the appearance of urban traits, especially among the African town people in large urban situations. Urbanization would therefore entail these two aspects. One of the significant impacts of this for the African churches, particularly in the cities, is that they have to Cope with the emergence of an African urban ethos Which tends to challenge as well as change some of the traditional values, e.g. the communal aspects of the kinship structure.

There is also the emergence within this urban ethos of the bureaucratization of certain aspects of the organization of the church, There are now committees dealing

⁵ Leo Kuper, *African Bourgeoisie* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), p.311. This text gives a general background about life of the black elite in South Africa.

⁶ Roland Robertson (ed.), *Sociology of Religion* (Penguin, 1969), pp.389–90.

with certain projects and sometimes issues in the life of the church; there is also an emphasis on the aspect of accountability, e.g: in the finance of the churches as well as in their overall administration. More and more emphasis is given to the education required for the occupation of certain positions in the churches, especially for the leadership.

The Other perhaps crucial aspect with which churches have to deal is the youth. They are prone to all forces of secularization, and their world view is dominated by western values which tend to challenge traditional norms and values. Many of these young people tend not to take the church very seriously. Included in this group is the African intelligentsia, that is, professional people who are a very small but significant minority in terms of their influence. These forces arising in an [p. 95](#) urban situation tend to influence the church in various ways. For example, many of the African independent churches in order to gain recognition from the government and the society at large are beginning to lay emphasis on training their leadership. In the African mainline protestant churches there is emphasis on expecting certain standards of intellectual achievement in the leadership and some kind of cultural sophistication. This would be true of the Anglican and Methodist churches which tend to attract the educated group.

The city or urban life is both a challenge to the church and the source of change to her theological understanding of the new situation. For example, the fragmentation of African traditional communal life and the emergence of individualism is a challenge to the church, as that institution which can provide an alternative Christian communal life style. Louis Wirth in his classical statement 'urbanism as a way of life' stresses the importance of voluntary groups or institutions in the development of urban personality and collective behaviour:

*It is largely through the activities of the voluntary groups, be their objectives economic, political, education, religious, recreational, or cultural, that the urbanite expresses and develops his personality, acquires status, and is able to carry on the round of activities that constitute his life career. It may easily be inferred, however, that the organizational framework which these highly differentiated functions call into being does not of itself ensure the consistency and integrity of the personalities whose interest it enlists.*⁷

If one takes this statement seriously, then one appreciates the role the church is to play in an urban situation: the church becoming the context out of which communal forms of life are developed in order to cater to the needs of the individual whose life is subject to all kinds of forces in the city. The church as understand it is the liberating agent of God in building authentic, caring city communities. To illustrate this point further, urban life, particularly around the big cities like Johannesburg and Cape Town, produces all kinds of deviant behaviour such as the 'tsotsi', someone prone to criminal behaviour mainly as a result of the socio-economic forces of an oppressive society. It is in this context that the church has a role to play in providing alternative concrete life styles for such people. Many other examples which are typical urban manifestations of African life can be given, such as a high rate of divorce, especially among the elite, and decline of moral standards resulting in forms of sexual deviance and promiscuity. It is in this context that the African urban church is confronted with dealing with [p. 96](#) human finitude, sin, and is called to become a vicarious liberating, healing community of Jesus Christ. The partial disappearance of traditional communal life due to the socio-economic and political pressures of urban life causes the church to become that community; a community based and indwelled by the liberating spirit of Jesus Christ. Christ in a city becomes the catalyst that recreates authentic healing communities, and I believe there

⁷ Robert Lee, *ibid.*

are some African independent churches which are attempting to provide this kind of ministry in the city.

Urbanization brings with it many challenges and changes; it changes the character of the African people, in Johannesburg for example, modifying their culture and in some respects transforming, though not completely, some of their traditional institutions, such as kinship. It is in this change characterized by problems of crime, poverty, moral laxity, oppression, that the church is called to be the liberating activity of God. These problems arise out of certain socio-economic political structures of urban life and in this particular case those dominated by the ideology of white supremacy known as Apartheid. In the following section I want to look at the role of the African urban church particularly as it relates to the existing socio-economic political structure of the South African society. I have given this rather broad superficial background of the African urban church situation to prepare the context in which one can begin to understand the broad societal structures.

III URBAN CHURCH IN SOCIAL CHANGE

As the recent events in South Africa have shown, the context of the expression of conflict will manifest itself in the urban areas for various social, economic and political reasons. It is this context of conflict, especially racial conflict generated by the political structures of Apartheid, that I want to examine in this section. The urban black church exists in a politically highly explosive situation, where the effects of oppression are felt most. The church is also, in this context, faced with the challenge of participating in the process of social change, becoming that which liberates human beings from oppression. This action is theologically not separable from the presence and the coming kingdom of God. By social change here, I mean the radical transformation of the socio-political structures, particularly the institutions of society.

The socio-political structures of the South African society are determined by the racist ideology of Apartheid. The political system is a white racial oligarchy in which all significant political power is vested [p. 97](#) in white hands and this becomes the basis of social stratification by which every institution in South Africa reflects the basic segregation, creating enormous gaps in terms of power and economic resources between blacks and whites. Blacks do not participate in the political decision-making process nor do they have equal opportunity of access to available resources and facilities. Blacks who are in the majority and concentrated in the large urban industrial areas are the victims of this white racial domination.

The urban African churches which are an offshoot of the mainline western protestant ecclesiastical tradition (this description includes both the African independent churches and the mainline protestant churches) are confronted with many problems, particularly the latter, as they have inherited (from the west) certain theological understandings of how the church should relate to the public sphere. There is a clear distinction between the church and society. The church is not to participate in political activity—a view which comes from the Lutheran tradition of the two kingdoms which continues to be reflected in many African urban churches. Many of the urban African churches have inherited this kind of political quietism from western Christian tradition. On the other hand, many of the white mainline protestant churches reflect the racist attitude of the South African society.

Most of the white Christians, with few exceptions, participate intentionally in the oppressive structures of Apartheid, for whom they are legitimate and this is what creates division and gives rise to conflict, particularly between the young generation of

African Christians and white Christians whose life is a complete betrayal and travesty of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The African Church, therefore, is confronted with a racially stratified society which permeates all the aspects of the so-called South African way of life.

It would be untrue to say African urban churches are not involved in the process of social change; they are, but one has to qualify this by pointing to what Max Weber calls charisma. All religious commitment to the process of social change is centered on charismatic leaders; e.g. Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement in the United States. One could even argue that the emergence of the African independent churches in South Africa was the result of the efforts of certain charismatic leaders; e.g. Mokone and Dwane. Weber does not use this notion in the strict religious sense but refers to a certain quality which an individual personality has by which he is set apart from the rest of the group and given a status of power and authority.

African churches will participate in the process of radical change [p. 98](#) under the efforts and leadership of their religious leaders. The religious professional, in the mainline and the African independent churches, has a decisive role in South Africa. It is represented by many young church leaders in the black theology movement which seeks to challenge the existing oppressive political structure of the South African society. In order to participate in a massive collective action by, especially, the urban African churches, the religious professional will have to understand very clearly the existing political structures and particularly the locus of white political power, which determines the life of the African urban community. Piere van der Berghe points to some of the ways the political system operates:

The following basic aims and principles of race policy have been shared by all South African governments since union: (1) The maintenance of paternalistic white domination; (2) Racial segregation and discrimination wherever there was any threat of equality or between white and nonwhite (blacks); (3) The perpetual subjugation of non-Europeans (blacks) and particularly Africans, as a politically powerless and economically exploitable group. The national policy of Apartheid is only the last phase in a long process of continuous strengthening of the system of white oppression.⁸

Any religious leadership within the African urban scene where oppression is felt most will have to recognize this factor in the process of socio-political change. There is no way, particularly in the present explosive situation in urban areas, in which the urban African church can avoid being an agent of liberation. The church is called upon as a fellowship, as well as a social institution in constant interaction with the other institutions of society, to be the manifestation of God's liberating activity in the world fully realized and authenticated in Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, many of the African independent churches are not fulfilling this, the role which essentially expresses the purpose and the nature of the people of God. The emphasis of these churches not surprisingly is on spiritual liberation but not concrete liberation—for this, to use Weber's notion—is what I call a theology of catalepsy; that is, political indifference and paralysis. The urban church as an institution representing God's liberating activity in the world is called upon to be that activity which is in an intrinsic aspect of his kingdom on earth ([Luke 4:18, 19](#)). [p. 99](#)

CONCLUSION

⁸ Piere Van de Berghe, *South Africa: A Study in Conflict* (Barclay: University California), p. 110.

I have deliberately omitted discussing the role of white urban churches in South Africa for the following reasons: i) Most of these churches, while struggling with the challenge of the Christian gospel, are identified with the existing oppressive political structures. ii) From my observation they do not reflect a clear commitment to the transformation of our society. iii) On the whole their leadership reflects a state of political inertia and comfortability with the status quo. The other reason is that the revival of Christianity in South Africa will depend largely on the kind of creative initiative black Christians take. It is in this context that I believe there is a great potential for African urban churches to work towards the transformation of our society. I have not dealt with all aspects of the role of the African urban church, nor have I attempted to give a systematic treatment of various theological and sociological notions regarding the role of the church. What I have done is to give a rather general overview, a description of the nature of these churches as well as to offer a prescription of what they ought to be doing in the African urban situation, particularly in the context of the South African situation.

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Luther and the One Church

Joachim Rogge

Translated from German and printed with permission

This paper given by a Lutheran pastor from the German Democratic Republic at the European Evangelical Alliance Council meetings September 1983 in Bad Blankenburg, GDR seeks to show the whole Church p. indebtedness to Luther in defining the true as against the false Church and in making Christ alone the touchstone of all theology and of Church unity.

(Editor)

Protestant Christians in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), and others too, have been and are being reminded by their marxist discussion partners of the attention that deserves to be given to Luther's understanding of the Church. That is astonishing. At this point we are right at the heart of the reformer's work, because we cannot interpret and discuss Luther's concept of the Church as just one doctrine among others. A working-party of social scientists from the GDR Academy of Sciences and from universities, set up on the instigation of the official state authorities, have published 'Theses on Martin Luther, on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of his birth'¹, and in the very first thesis they write: In the late Middle Ages the Church could 'only be shaken from within, through a fundamental attack on its dogmatic foundations. The decisive thrust came therefore not, as educated contemporaries expected, from the humanists and their

¹ *Theses on Luther*. Published by authority of the German Democratic Republic on the occasion of the Quincentenary of Luther's birth, 1983 by the Central Institute for History of the Academy of Sciences of the German Democratic Republic. 1981, 7.

world-famous leader Erasmus of Rotterdam, but from Martin Luther, until then an almost unknown monk. He led the attack and through his new understanding of the relationship between God and man—the justification of man before God by faith alone—set up a new concept of the Church, which intellectually overcame the foundations of the old Church and called into question its whole structure and exercise of power. He combined his criticism of the Church, which was based on the Bible, with political, social and economic demands.'

DOCTRINAL FOUNDATIONS

However one may understand the words 'from within', it is certainly a correct perception, and worthy of continuing note for us today, that Luther started neither from questions of structure, nor from problems [p. 101](#) of the division of power, nor from a desire for sociopolitical renewal—all these things were secondary and only became important later. His starting-point was the key question of the attitude of God to man and the attitude of man towards God. This relationship, which Luther recognized as the most vital and important in human life, seemed to him in the whole of the late medieval Church to be distorted and disturbed. What seemed to him decisive was not man seeking the way to God but rather God seeking the way to man, and from that the way to God and to other men could be opened. It was this direction, this movement that mattered for Luther.

From this fundamental consideration it follows that the reformer who pointed towards God's coming to man in Christ, did not then attach a series of requirements for the founding of churches, nor did he lay down structures or set out immutable regulations. Luther was not the man for ecclesiological patterns or forms of order that were to be obligatory for everyone. He regarded it as important that the free run of God's liberating grace should not be hindered by a profusion of human rules and regulations. And in this connection he came up relatively quickly against hierarchical orderings, forms of confession, indulgences and an extensive church calendar of saints and festivals. Luther wanted the simple Church, that should be completely free of God's activity in Christ, whose divine foundation and constant renewal should be based on adherence to God's word. He expresses that in numerous ways, for example that the Church is 'a creature of the Gospel'.² In the Smalcaldic Articles, the great private confession that later attained the status of a fundamental writing on the faith, Luther asserts that the Church is not something static, not an institution with an unalterable form of order, but rather a process, as it were a process of hearing, whereby the speech linked with it is just as decisive as the organ of perception. In the 1537 article 'On the Church' we read: 'We do not admit that they (the "papists") are the Church; they are not, whether or not they wish to hear it, whatever they permit or forbid in the name of the Church; for praise God, a 7-year old child (7 is the lower limit of responsibility) knows what the Church is, namely the holy believers and those "who hear the voice of their shepherd" ([In. 10:3](#)); for children pray thus: "I believe in the one holy Christian [p. 102](#)

² Hans Joachim Iwand: *Luthers Theologie* (The Theology of Luther). Edited by Johann Haar, Munich 1974, pp.241-249. In this connection see Karl Gerhard Steck: *Lehre und Kirche bei Luther*, (Doctrine and Church in Luther), Munich 1963 p.73 and throughout. Note Luther's phrase: 'The Church is daughter of the Word, born from the Word, and is not the mother of the Word'. W.A. 42.334. (*Weimarer Ausgabe*, the definitive edition of Luther's Works, published Leipzig 1883—).

Church".³ And in the light of the church situation of his time Luther immediately puts into concrete form one idea within that, in order to illustrate the interruption of the process of hearing by 'human regulation':⁴ 'his holiness does not consist in choir robes, in tonsures, long vestments and their other ceremonies that they erected over and above the Holy Scriptures, but rather in God's word and in right belief.'⁵

MARKS OF THE CHURCH

After the above mentioned quotation Luther lays down criteria for what the Church is, how it comes into existence and being and what hinders it. He does not reject and delimit with a view to setting up new groupings and layers; rather, they bring freedom and liberation for the essential, that is for the recognition of the Pauline assertion that faith comes from preaching.⁶ So Luther does not narrow the space for the shaping of the Church, he opens it up, he releases a biblically obedient Christianity into the freedom of protestant tradition-forming without the claim to be laying down obligatory organizational, e.g. liturgical, requirements in the manner of the Wittenberg practice.⁷ In Luther's understanding difficulties in forming the Church only arise where the emphasis is no longer on hearing but where instead decrees are laid down based on ecclesiastical, ethnic, economic or other considerations with the intention that they should be normative for all. The 'satis est' in *Confessio Augustana* VII (which Luther did not formulate but which he approved) defines the community of saints, the unity of the Church, in terms of extremely few but utterly decisive characteristics, namely first, the preaching of the Gospel according to a right understanding, and second, the administration of the sacraments in accordance with God's word.⁸

The vast sphere of human traditions has been established by men, and for the sake of the *unitas ecclesiae* it can be regarded as continually dispensable. An immobile Church that is constantly reaffirming [p. 103](#) itself finds no affirmation in Luther's thinking. On the contrary: the Church must be shaped in such a way as to create the greatest possible freedom for the preaching and hearing of the word of God. There can therefore never be a church system that is in itself sacrosanct, but rather a steadfast and brotherly moving together of Christians from different structures for the sake of a unified witness to Christ before the world.

The above train of thought gives rise to a series of reflections that could be crucial for future endeavours towards the one Church and towards a more visible fellowship among churches. Without exception they are liberating rather than encumbering. The Roman Catholic theologian Otto Hermann Pesch from Hamburg in a paper on 'Luther and the Church' at the 6th International Congress on Luther Research held in Erfurt in 1983, pointed out unambiguously that the Lutheran (state) churches could hardly

³ *Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* (The Confessional Writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church). Edited in the commemorative year of the Augsburg Confession 1930. Second improved edition, Göttingen 1955, 459f.

⁴ *loc. cit.* (book just quoted) p.461

⁵ *loc. cit.* p.460

⁶ Romans. 10.17

⁷ In this connection see The Preface to the German Mass, 1526, W.A. 19.73. 1-4.

⁸ As note 3, *Confessional Writings* p.61

'regard themselves as a direct realization of Luther's vision of the Church.'⁹ Luther cannot automatically be appealed to by a 'Lutheran' Church that arose juridically on the basis of Luther's writings on the faith.' Such a Church 'bears the spiritual and theological stamp of Luther's theology with, in addition, new theological influences from within the Reformation'. It has according to Pesch 'transposed the medieval "Corpus Christianum" into the framework of a territorial Church'. It can be said that 'theologically only since the Enlightenment and juridically (if at all) only since 1918' has it been in a position 'to structure itself on the basis of theological arguments alone without any political considerations'.¹⁰ Here too Luther does not prescribe; he opens. Pesch takes account of this thought by means of a negative sentence, but one which can have a productive and activating effect: 'It was not theological reasons or counter-reasons but rather constitutional, canonical and ecclesiopolitical realities that prevented Luther from bringing about a church reform according to his own understanding of it, and that means specifically bringing about the changes in the practice of piety which on the basis of his theological insights were necessary'.¹¹

TRUE AND FALSE CHURCH

Luther, the reformer, thus does not define the renewing of the Church; [P. 104](#) he had no firmly delineated pattern of church doctrine or church order, and so he allows us ourselves, as we reflect upon his criteria for the Church, to be church reformers.

Luther believed in the Church. The Church finds expression in the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. As a credal Church it is to that extent also a visible Church that needs structures, structures however that do not have their own autonomous existence but are always flexible in order to do justice to the work of the Church in changing situations. Pesch is totally right in his interpretation of Luther's understanding of the unity of the Church when he says: 'For Luther the unity of the Church was always the given unity of the community of faith, which could neither be contrived nor destroyed nor recreated. In the light of Luther, therefore, the fragmentation that has arisen can also be seen today for what it was then: canonical and ecclesiopolitical division on the basis of theological propositions that for the present were irreconcilable but that did not nullify the fundamental unity of the body, albeit at the cost of the thesis relating to the intermingling of the true and false Church'.¹²

The last thought does, to be sure, need an addition as far as the papal Church at the time of the Reformation is concerned. Luther was very certain that he could here distinguish clearly between the true and the false Church. In '*Against Hanswurst*', written in 1541, he calls the old papal Church the new false Church.¹³ Luther is firmly convinced that he neither introduced nor taught anything new. He believed himself to be in the old true Church on the basis of the list of criteria set out in his introduction. He is consistent,

⁹ Unpublished paper p.8

¹⁰ As Note 9. Unpublished paper.

¹¹ As quoted [p.11](#)

¹² As quoted [p.17](#)

¹³ W.A. 51.477.24. In this connection compare J. Rogge: *Reformation als Problem und bleibende Aufgabe der Kirchen*, (Reformation as the Problem and continuing Task of the Church), in *Erbe und Verpflichtung. Reformationsgedenkenbuch* (Inheritance and Obligation. A Commemorative Book of the Reformation). Edited by F. Lau, Berlin. 1967. pp.98–105.

if not harsh, in denying the papal Church the title 'Church'.¹⁴ 'When Luther hears that *he* has fallen away from the Church, he can only understand that in the sense that he has fallen "from the non-true Church".¹⁵ It all hinges on the point where one can show which is the true Church. As long as nothing can be shown, it would be futile for one part of the Church to pride itself and to dismiss another as heretical. At a time of attempted ecumenical dialogue one may regret the sharpness of Luther's statements. However, we are not [p. 105](#) primarily concerned with the historical rectification of reproaches that were being exchanged between both sides, but rather of examining the yardstick from which Luther came to his damnations. Whether or not he was unjust in applying his criteria to the condition of the Roman Church of his time is only of secondary interest for a definition of the reforming elements themselves.'¹⁶

CONCEALMENT AND VISIBILITY

From the foregoing we can see that only in a very limited sense is Luther a forerunner of the ecumenical movement as we understand it today. However, from his understanding of the Church based on the Word of God there arose in stark contrast to the Roman Church throughout the preceding centuries a multiplicity of churches, of territorial and minority churches, whose paths for the most part later led them to the position of Free Churches. Basically the separating churches derive their various paths from different interpretations of the Word of God. The Baptist churches have an understanding of baptism that differs from that of the larger churches, the Methodist churches have their long history with the larger churches in relation to divergent views on the practice of piety incorporating a number of individual theological implications.

So far Free Churches throughout the world are only very loosely amalgamated, and like the territorial churches they must ask themselves whether traditional non-theological factors have proved more decisive in their separation than real and genuine controversies over the understanding on the Word. If it is true that a differing understanding of the Word of God divided protestant churches for over half a millennium, then there is no other way than for the Way of God to bring them together again. The scope for church-dividing diastasis has now shrunk, particularly as, for instance, there is much baptist thought contending for adult baptism present within the doctrinal forms of the larger churches.

It remains to be seen whether the indirect initiator of so many different protestant denominations must continue to be the author of different paths and the divider of the Church. The decisive criteria in and for Luther's understanding of the Church bind together and permit the umbrella for a common existence as the Church to be both broad and wide. A common understanding of the Church is endangered by a [p. 106](#) spiritualism that departs from the Word of God with its outward dimension, or by a concern with ecclesiastical structures in a Church that seeks to affirm the autonomy of its own offices. If the spirits or offices thus departing from the Word of God claim their own unique validity, then they must be contradicted not only from Luther but from the very Word of God itself. The Church umbrella cannot be so wide that it has no borders at all. The constant struggle for the right criteria here will go hand in hand with the unceasing and indispensable process of interpreting the Holy Scriptures. The tension

¹⁴ As above [p.105](#)

¹⁵ W.A. 51.477.24.

¹⁶ J. Rogge. Work quoted, p.105

between the visibility and the concealment of the Church must, with Luther, continue to be affirmed. He declared quite succinctly: The Church is concealed, the saints are concealed ('abscondita est ecclesia, latent sancti').¹⁷ In perhaps his most significant later writing on the question of the Church Luther can talk of the blind word Church, but this is only after he had spoken in 1539 of a child's belief in the holy people of God. He writes: 'And if in the Children's Creed such words were used as: I believe in one holy Christian people, then all the misery that has spread through this blind, obscure word (Church) could easily have been avoided. For the words "holy Christian people" would clearly and powerfully have brought with them both understanding and discernment as to what is the Church and what is not the Church. For whoever would have heard these words, holy Church people, would quickly have been able to discern: The Pope is no people, much less a holy Christian people'.¹⁸

CHURCH AS THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Luther understood the Church as people of God 'in whom Christ lives, works and reigns through redemption, through grace and the forgiveness of sins, through the daily cleansing of sins and renewal of life, that should not remain in sins but should lead a new life in all good works, and not in old evil works, as the Ten Commandments or two tables of Moses demand'.¹⁹ Here is everything together: a right distinction between Law and Gospel, the sanctification of the Christian as a gift of the Holy Spirit and justification as a gift of God. All this happens in the place where Christ works and reigns, that is the Church, which might better be called the people of God. There are not two people of God, in the one Church both justification and sanctification take place! **P. 107**

Luther speaks a great deal about sanctification or sanctity; for the Holy Spirit is active, primarily in 'giving people faith in Christ and sanctifying them thereby, Acts 15',²⁰ that is, he renews our heart, soul, body, work and being, and he writes God's commandments not on tables of stone but on hearts of flesh ...'.²¹

So both becoming and being the Church is a God-given, all-embracing, life-giving activity which at best tolerates regulations in so far as they are of service, but naturally subjects them to constant scrutiny. The same applies to persons who serve the life-giving activity among the people of God, that they should not have a hampering effect by assuming a self-affirming office as 'those who wish to remain',²² as Luther affirmed in his exegesis of the Psalms as early as 1319–21. Church pomp, fasts, worldly affairs must be dissolved, to make space in the Church for the office of the Word and for prayer in accordance with the example of the apostles. 'Offices and sacraments always remain in the Church, though the people may change daily. Only such persons should be called and installed who can administer them, thus they will most certainly continue to be

¹⁷ W.A. 18.652.23

¹⁸ *On the Councils and the Churches*, W.A. 50.625. 3–10. On the whole problem see: Joseph Vercruyse *Fidelis Populus* (The Faithful People) Wiesbaden. 1968.

¹⁹ As above 24–29

²⁰ Acts. 15.9

²¹ W.A. 50.626. 16–18

²² W.A. 5.337. 2–7; W.A. 50.516. 1–5

exercised ...'²³ Faith and sacrament should not 'be based on the person, be he godly or evil, consecrated or unconsecrated, called or an impostor, the devil or his mother, but rather on Christ, on his word, on his office, on his command and ordinance ...' The aim and intention of these robust formulations is evident: Church activity is the working of the Word, all orders of office and service are subordinate to that. The preaching of the Gospel and baptism are entrusted to man but are not in his gift.

CHRIST ALONE—KEY TO UNITY

The Norwegian Reformation historian Inge Lonning, in a contribution prepared for the 6th International Congress on Luther Research, draws the following conclusion from the above considerations: 'This approach should not be taken to mean that the essential unity of the Church is an uncontested fact or a basically unassailable ideal. The Church is not a platonic state. Unity would rather be seen (so too should the Gospel that brings it about) as a unity that is constantly under threat from the Church's enemies. Danger does not threaten so [P. 108](#) much from without, e.g. from the multiplicity of organizationally fragmented denominational groupings—the Church's unity was in any case never of an organizational kind—but rather from an intrusion arising from within, or other elements into the truth of the Gospel. There lies the permanent ecumenical problem, that is the Church's problem with its own identity.'²⁴

Much remains controversial. There will never be some satisfying description of the Church that will find universal acceptance. Luther knows that, but nevertheless he is hopeful, indeed full of confidence, in regard to the marks of the Church, the maintenance and continuity of the Church. In a sermon in 1537 on [John 1:8](#) Luther concentrates on the centrality of Christ, from whom everything derives and to whom all is directed. He affirms what unites us prior to any individual reflection and also what can continue to bring us together in a greater outworking of common fellowship than heretofore: 'Although the Christian Church be dispersed among all the peoples of the world, from east to west and from north to south, she must be firmly united in this point, that she acknowledges and adheres to Christ alone as her light and that she knows and preaches Christ alone, as we, praise God, are doing here, conforming our whole teaching, writings and sermons to that. Reason may raise high its light and boast of it, and it may indeed be learned in worldly and temporal matters. But let it under no circumstances thus climb into heaven, nor should one seek reason's counsel in matters pertaining to salvation. For in this respect the world and reason are totally blind. They will always remain in darkness and in all eternity will never shed light. The sole light is Christ alone, he can and will counsel and help us.'

'If that were to happen, and we were to adhere steadfastly to that belief in Christ alone, then (all) Christians everywhere in the world would have this same perception, doctrine and faith and would teach and preach the same. As we here are thus minded, so too would our brethren be who live in the Orient. If someone were to come here from Babylon and were to hear our lectures or sermons, he would say: I too believe as you teach; I adhere to the only light, Christ. And he would acknowledge that we preach of the one light, Christ. And if I were to go to Turkey and heard a Christian speaking from Scripture about Christian doctrine and belief, I too would then say: That is also my firm

²³ W.A. 38.241. 6-21

²⁴ *Das blinde Wort und die verborgene Wirklichkeit* (Blind Word and Hidden Reality). Suggestions on the Theme Luther and the Church. Unpublished paper p.7

belief. So we are all named Christians after our Lord Christ, so [p. 109](#) that, in accordance with our name, we should know that he alone is our light, life, path, hope and salvation etc. Others can be called what they like: they are no light, they are nothing but darkness. If I were to put into one heap all those who like to call themselves lights, they would be revealed as nothing but will-o'-the-wisps or sprites, who are only seen at night and so lead a person that he finally falls into water and drowns or otherwise perishes in stone-quarries or lime-pits.²⁵

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Counsel for Christ's Under-Shepherds: An Exposition of 1 Peter 5:1-4

D. Edmond Hiebert

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This exposition is a good example of western biblical scholarship and is a model in exegesis for all preachers. However, no attempt is made to interpret the passage for the contemporary Church witnessing under the pressure of secular materialism or oppression and persecution from hostile political and religious powers. Preachers in the Third World would want to insist that identification and obedience in relating the text to their context is fundamental to the Word preached.

(Editor)

Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow-elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory ([1 Pet. 5:1-4](#), NASB).

In these four verses Peter offers loving counsel to the leaders of the afflicted believers living in five Roman provinces in what is today called Asia Minor. They constitute the first section of the concluding paragraph ([5:1-11](#)) of this practical epistle.

The opening "Therefore" () indicates a logical thought connection with what has gone before. This particle is omitted in the Textus Receptus, perhaps because this concluding paragraph of the epistle proper does not seem to be an obvious deduction from what has just been said, as "therefore" seemingly suggests. If it is omitted, [5:1-11](#) may be viewed as an appropriate summary of the author's ethical appeals to his readers.

²⁵ W.A. 46.587. 8-37. With many texts on the theme of Luther's theology of the Church, collated and translated into modern German by Hermann Kunst, with notes. *Martin Luther und die Kirche*, (Martin Luther and the Church). Stuttgart 1971. p.125f.

But modern textual editors agree in accepting it as the original reading.¹ Then, in keeping with the inferential force of the particle, it is generally viewed as constituting, in effect, an expansion on “doing what is right” (έν ἀγαθοποιίᾳ), the concluding words of the preceding paragraph (4:19). [p. 112](#)

In these words of counsel to Christian leaders Peter names the recipients of his appeal (v. [1a](#)), identifies the person making the appeal (v. [1b](#)), concisely designates the duty of the elders (v. [2a](#)), underlines the motives that must govern their work (vv. [2b-3](#)), and points to the reward awaiting the faithful under-shepherds (v. [4](#)).

THE RECIPIENTS OF THE APPEAL

The words “I exhort the elders among you” (v. [1a](#)) identify the specific group now addressed. “The elders” (πρεσβυτέρους) stands prominently first in the sentence. But “among you” (ἐν ὑμῖν) — the churches addressed — makes clear that he is addressing them in their relation to the churches. Each of the churches had one or more “elders” in their midst. The context establishes that “elders” is used in an official sense, but from verse [5](#) it is clear that the term retains something of its original sense of age, “one older than another” ([Luke 15:25](#)). The term does not imply “advanced age but merely establishes seniority.”²

Whenever the New Testament refers to these officers, it consistently pictures a plurality of elders in the local church ([Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Phil 1:1; 1 Thess. 5:12; James 5:14](#)). There is no account of the institution of the office of elder in the New Testament church; when first mentioned it was already in existence in the church of Jerusalem ([Acts 11:30](#)). The pattern for church leadership was obviously drawn from the Jewish synagogue. On their first missionary journey Paul and Barnabas followed that pattern in organizing their recently established Gentile churches ([Acts 14:23](#)). The designation was well known in the Greco-Roman world as applied to leaders in civic as well as religious associations.³ This simple terminology is consistent with the early date of the epistle. Peter was well aware that in time of persecution much depended on the prudence and fidelity of these leaders.

“I exhort” (παρακαλῶ), not “I command,” marks Peter’s attitude in addressing these leaders. He does not stress his own authority but rather appeals to their own sense of what is right. He avoids any implication of the imposition of a higher authority but uses instead the method of spiritual persuasion. [p. 113](#)

THE PERSON MAKING THE APPEAL

¹ Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1935); Alexander Souter, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962); Erwin Nestle and Kurt Aland, 24th ed., *Novum Testamentum Graece* (New York: American Bible Society n.d.); Kurt Aland, et al., eds., 3d ed., *The Greek New Testament* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1975); R. V. G. Tasker, *The Greek New Testament, Being the Text Translated in the New English Bible 1961* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).

² E. M. Blaiklock, *First Peter: A Translation and Devotional Commentary* (Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1977), p.103.

³ James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1952), p.535; Willaim Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter*, The Daily Study Bible, 2d ed. (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1960), p.312.

The writer identifies himself “as your fellow-elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed” (v. [1b](#)). In form it is a double appositional expansion of the “I” in the verb “exhort.” This intimate self-identification adds to the persuasiveness of the appeal. Aside from his name in [1:1](#), the writer’s identity appears more forcefully here than anywhere else in the epistle. Modestly, his apostolic identity is not asserted. This fact has been appealed to by both opponents and proponents of Petrine authorship. Beare, who rejects apostolic authorship, sees in this self-identification “the apparatus of pseudepigraphy” and insists that it “would ill become Peter himself, but is perfectly natural in the language of another man writing in his name.”⁴ Polking-horne replies, “Surely, however, a forger would most certainly have stressed apostilicity; otherwise there would be little purpose in using Peter’s name, so that the omission is actually favourable to Petrine authorship.”⁵ This writer agrees. This self-description shows “that what Peter here urges upon elders he exemplifies in his own life and office.”⁶

The designation “your fellow-elder” (ò συμπρεσβύτερος), “the fellow-elder,” occurs only here in the New Testament and places the writer on a level with the elders being addressed. “He is not speaking down to them as superior to inferiors.”⁷ In calling himself an “elder” Peter doubtless was thinking of the commission given him by the risen Lord to shepherd His flock ([John 21:15-17](#)). The Apostle John also called himself “the elder” ([2 John 1](#); [3 John 1](#)), and Papias (ca. A.D. 60–130) wrote of John as an elder and of the other apostles as elders.⁸ The apostolic office included the work of the elders, although it was much wider in extent. “What the elders were for the individual congregations, that were the apostles for the [p. 114](#) whole church.”⁹ Peter thus indicates that he “personally felt the responsibilities, and from experience knew the difficulties, of an elder.”¹⁰

As fellow-elder he is also a “witness of the sufferings of Christ.” “And” connects his position with his experience as a “witness” (μάρτυς). The term does not denote a spectator but one who testifies to something, He gave testimony concerning “the sufferings of Christ” (τῶν τοῦ Χριστοῦ παθημάτων), the sufferings which the Messiah Himself endured (*cf.* [4:13](#)). “Witness” may mean either an eyewitness or more generally one who bears testimony to what he accepts as true. If the writer is Peter, the natural meaning is that he was an eyewitness of Christ’s sufferings. The following description of himself as “a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed” clearly points to the idea of personal experience. In the light of [Acts 1:8](#), [22](#) the term implies an apostolic witness. It

⁴ Francis Wright Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), p.198.

⁵ G. J. Polkinghorne, “The First Letter of Peter,” in *A New Testament Commentary*, ed. G. C. D. Rowley (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1969), p.596.

⁶ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude* (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1938), p.220.

⁷ Wm. C. Waltemyer, “The First Epistle of Peter,” in *New Testament Commentary*, ed. Herbert C. Alleman (Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the United Lutheran Church of America, 1944), p.655.

⁸ As quoted in Eusebius Pamphilus, *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus*, trans. C. F. Cruse (London: George Bell & Sons, 1897), 3:39.

⁹ Joh. Ed. Huther, “Critical and Exegetical Handbook to General Epistles of Peter and Jude”, in Meyer’s *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1881), p.230.

¹⁰ Robert Johnstone, *The First Epistle of Peter: Revised Text, with Introduction and Commentary* (1888; reprint ed., Minneapolis: The James Family Christian Publishers, 1978), p.379.

is in the sense of a personal eyewitness that Peter uses this term in [Acts 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39](#). The thought of the Messiah suffering was at one time very distasteful to Peter ([Matt. 16:22](#)), but he has himself seen those sufferings and it is now his task to bear witness to their reality and significance. He has done so repeatedly in this epistle ([1:11; 2:21; 3:18; 4:1, 13](#)).

Opponents of Petrine authorship point out that the Gospels do not mention Peter as personally present at the Crucifixion. The same is also true of the rest of the Twelve, except John. Yet Peter, as well as others of the Twelve, may well have been among “all His acquaintances” who observed the event from afar ([Luke 23:49](#)). It is contrary to the structure of Luke’s statement to limit these observers to “a number of women,” as Leaney does.¹¹ Peter certainly did observe the agony of Christ in Gethsemane, saw Him bound and delivered into the hands of His enemies, and observed at least some of the injustices heaped on Him in the court of the high priest. Thus understood, the term is a delicate reminder of the actual difference between himself and the elders addressed. His teaching about the sufferings of Christ was grounded in personal experience.

Those who date the epistle after the death of Peter naturally find the eyewitness implication unacceptable and insist that the term here simply means “‘one who testifies’ ... to what he holds to be the truth.”¹² It is held that any implication that he was an eyewitness is inconsistent with [p. 115](#) the fact that Peter has just placed himself on a level with the elders in calling himself a “fellow-elder.” But this supposed difficulty is without force; having initially identified himself as “an apostle of Jesus Christ” ([1:1](#)), using this term now to underscore the validity of his testimony is natural. If the writer meant that he, like the elders addressed, was simply proclaiming the message of Christ’s sufferings, it would have been proper to call himself a “fellow-witness” as further marking his equality with them. Peter does not say that he actually shared in the sufferings of the Messiah, but it is true that he has since then personally suffered for his faith and testimony. In thus suffering for his Christian witness Peter was indeed on a level with the elders addressed.

The words, “and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed,” is structurally a second appositional description of the writer. Here Peter identifies himself in relation to the Christian hope for the future. “And” (*καὶ*) indicates that this eschatological element is properly a part of the full picture. Suffering and glory are never far apart in Peter’s mind. “Of the about-to-be-revealed glory” (Greek order) points to a glory whose unveiling is eagerly anticipated. The reference is not to “the glories of heaven” to be entered at death, as Barnes suggests,¹³ but to the unveiling of Christ’s glories at His return to earth. Having witnessed the sufferings of the Messiah, Peter is assured that the revelation of the messianic glory will follow ([1:11](#)). Of that glory Peter describes himself as being “a partaker” (*κοινωνός*, “one who takes part in something with someone”).¹⁴ The term implies personal participation. Peter had a glimpse of that glory in the Transfiguration (*cf. 2 Pet. 1:16–18*), but on that occasion he did not himself participate in the glory. With his experience of the “living hope” through the risen Christ ([1 Pet. 1:3](#)), he already

¹¹ A. R. C. Leaney, “*The Letters of Peter and Jude*,” in The Cambridge Bible Commentary, New English Bible (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p.69.

¹² Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter*, p.198.

¹³ Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament* (reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1962), p.1433.

¹⁴ William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p.440.

knows the reality of rejoicing “with joy inexpressible and full of glory” ([1:8](#)), but he also knows that this new life, already connected with glory in the soul, awaited its full glorious manifestation at the time of Christ’s return.

THE DUTY TO SHEPHERD THE FLOCK

Peter’s exhortation, “Shepherd the flock of God among you” (v. [2a](#)), tersely portrays the work of the elders under the familiar shepherd imagery. This shepherd-sheep relation, describing the spiritual task of the [P. 116](#) leaders of God’s people, involves “the twofold function of Control and devotion.”¹⁵ The command, “shepherd” (*ποιμάνατε*), includes all that is involved in the work of the shepherd: guiding and guarding, feeding and folding. The aorist command conveys a sense of urgency. It “calls upon the elders to have their official life as a unity characterized by the spirit of devotion to service.”¹⁶

They must devote themselves to “the flock of God among you.” “Flock” (*ποίμνιον*) as a singular noun depicts the unity of the Christian church. It is a diminutive form, “the little flock” (*cf. Luke 12:32*), but the force of the diminutive cannot be pressed.¹⁷ Its use here and in verse [3](#) apparently expresses endearment. Rotherham translates, “Shepherd the beloved flock of God.”¹⁸ “Of God” designates this flock “as belonging, not to the elders who tend it, but to God as His peculiar property.”¹⁹ “Among you” (*ἐνύμιν*), placed attributively between the article and the noun, points to the character of the flock in the presence of the shepherds. They are not absentee lords, but are shepherds actively working with the flock around them.

The Authorized Version, following the Textus Receptus, has the further words, “taking the oversight thereof” (*ἐπισκοποῦντες*), a further characterization of the work of the elders. This participle is present in the majority of the Greek manuscripts and in all the early versions, but some important manuscripts omit it. Modern textual critics debate whether it is to be accepted as authentic.²⁰ This writer accepts it as most probably original. It is especially appropriate in introducing what follows and is fully in keeping with Peter’s fondness for participles.

The participle expands on the manner in which the elders are to carry out their assignment of shepherding the flock. The verb means “to oversee, to care for”; it depicts the pastoral function of overseeing or caring for those under their supervision. The noun is commonly rendered “bishop” or “overseer.” This indicates that as yet no difference between “elders” [p. 117](#) and “bishops” had developed when this letter was written. In the New Testament these two terms are used interchangeably of the same men ([Acts 20:17-28](#); [Titus 1:5-7](#)). “Elder” points to the mature age which qualified the individual

¹⁵ James Moffatt, *The General Epistles, James, Peter, and Judas*, The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1928), pp. 162–63.

¹⁶ Johnstone, *The First Epistle of Peter*, p.382.

¹⁷ Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p.524.

¹⁸ Joseph Bryant Rotherham, *The Emphasized New Testament* (reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1959).

¹⁹ Huther, “General Epistles of Peter and Jude,” p.232.

²⁰ It is *omitted* in the Greek texts of Westcott and Hort; Nestle and Aland (24th ed.); and Tasker. It is included *in brackets* in the United Bible Societies text (3d ed.); and Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Biblestiftung, 1979). It is included *without brackets* in Souter; and in the United Bible Societies text (1st ed., 1966).

for the office; “bishop” (overseer) indicates that the duties of the office involve spiritual oversight.

THE MOTIVES OF THE ELDERS

Peter, keenly aware that motives are important in the service of the Lord, sets forth three adverbial modifiers, each negatively and positively stated, to guide the work of the elders. He touches on three common vices in Christian service with their alternative virtues.

Personal Attitude Toward the Work (v. 2b)

Negatively, the elder must do his work “not under compulsion” ($\mu\bar{n}\ \acute{a}n\acute{a}g\kappa\alpha\sigma\tilde{\omega}\varsigma$), an adverbial form appearing only here in the New Testament. He should not occupy the office as a reluctant draftee, doing an irksome task because he feels he cannot escape it. Such a feeling may arise out of “a false sense of unworthiness, a reluctance for responsibility, or a desire to do no more than was morally required in the office.”²¹ Such feelings are unworthy of one called to sacred service, But in [1 Corinthians 9:16](#) Paul mentions a proper sense of compulsion, the constraint of God’s sovereign will for one’s life, which is to be accepted willingly and wholeheartedly.

Positively, one motivated by such a sense of compulsion will do the work “voluntarily” ($\acute{\epsilon}\kappa\omega\sigma\acute{\iota}\omega\varsigma$), deliberately and intentionally as a matter of free will, like a volunteer who delights to do the work. Love for the Lord and His work prompts willing service.

The words “according to the will of God” ($\kappa\acute{a}\tau\acute{a}\ \theta\acute{e}\acute{o}\nu$) are to be taken closely with “voluntarily.” They are not in the Textus Receptus, represented by the Authorised Version. This prepositional phrase is not found in some uncials, nor in most minuscule manuscripts, but it does appear in various early Greek manuscripts and different versions.²² Textual editors are not agreed but generally accept the words as authentic.²³ They were probably omitted by the scribes who found difficulty in understanding the precise import of the phrase. It [p. 118](#) can, by expansion, be understood to mean “according to the will of God.” Then the meaning is that the elder must be obedient to what he knows to be God’s will for him. But more probably the preposition ($\kappa\acute{a}\tau\acute{a}$) is to be taken in its familiar force of indicating a standard or model (*cf.* [1:15](#); [4:6](#)) “according to God,” that is, “just as God shepherds His flock.”²⁴ Cranfield remarks that the meaning is best illustrated “in the whole-heartedness of the Chief Shepherd himself, who could say, ‘My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work.’ ”²⁵

Personal Profit from the Work (v. 2b)

²¹ David H. Wheaton, “1 Peter,” in *The New Bible Commentary, Revised*, eds. D. Guthrie and J. A. Moyter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1970), p.1247.

²² For the evidence see the United Bible Societies Greek text.

²³ The words ($\kappa\acute{a}\tau\acute{a}\ \theta\acute{e}\acute{o}\nu$) were omitted by Westcott and Hort, and by Nestle and Aland (24th ed.). They appear in the text of Souter; United Bible Societies text; and Tasker.

²⁴ A. F. Mitchell, *Hebrews and the General Epistles*, The Westminster New Testament (London: Andrew Melrose, 1911), pp.279–80.

²⁵ C. E. B. Cranfield, *I & II Peter and Jude: Introduction and Commentary*, Torch Bible Commentaries (London: SCM Press, 1960), pp.128–29.

“And not for sordid gain, but with eagerness” raises the matter of deriving personal gain from Christian service. “Not for sordid gain” (μηδὲ αἰσχροκερδῶς), another adverb occurring only here in the New Testament, means “fondness for his dishonest gain,” gain procured in a base and avaricious manner, producing shame if uncovered. This does not prohibit the elder from receiving a fair return for honest toil. Peter, like Paul, accepted the ordinance of Christ that “the labourer is worthy of his wages” ([Luke 10:7](#); [1 Tim. 5:18](#)). But Peter is warning against taking up the work because of a desire for material gain, “it being a shameful thing for a shepherd to feed the sheep out of love to the fleece.”²⁶ It is a warning against a sordid preoccupation with material advantages. To enter the ministry simply because it offers a respectable and intellectually stimulating way of gaining a livelihood is to prostitute that sacred work. This warning also includes the temptation to use the work of the ministry to gain personal popularity or social influence. When a love for gain reigns; the shepherds are prone to become mere hirelings, feeding themselves at the expense of the flock.

The antidote to this evil is serving “with eagerness” (προθύμως, “eagerly,” or “zealously”), doing so with inward delight. The desire to serve must precede any consideration of personal profit.

Personal Relation to the People (v. 3)

The third indication of motives, “nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock,” [p. 119](#) concerns the elder’s personal relation to his people. Peter now uses two participles with adverbial force to depict the wrong and the right relationship.

The warning to the elders not to act “as lording it over” (μηδ’ ὡς κατακυριεύοντες) the people implies that they did exercise a real authority in the congregations; the subtle danger was the temptation to misuse that authority. “As” implies the assumption of a position that was not proper. The compound verb pictures the scene: the simple verb κυριεύω means “to control, rule, to be lord or master of,” while the preposition κατὰ (“down”) indicates intensity and depicts a heavy-handed use of authority for personal aggrandizement, manifesting itself in the desire to dominate and accompanied by a haughty demand for compliance. Jesus directly condemned such abuse of authority among His followers ([Matt. 20:25-27](#); [Mark 10:42-44](#)). The tragic impact of such an attitude is illustrated by the account of Diotrephes in [3 John 9-10](#). All genuine rule in the church is in no sense a lordship but an administration of Christ’s lordship by His willing servants.

The people subjected to this abuse of authority are designated as “those allotted to your charge” (τῶν κλήρων). This noun literally means “a lot,” and then “that which is assigned by lot,” a portion or share of something. The plural, “the portions,” refers to the various congregations which in God’s providential arrangements have been allotted to different groups of elders. The allotment implies responsibility; God has assigned the various portions of His precious possession to their personal care. Elders thus ought not to think they can do with their allotted portion as they please.

“But” (ἀλλὰ), marking a contrast, introduces the true relationship of the elders to their people: “proving to be examples to the flock” (τύποι γινόμενοι τοῦ ποιμνίου, literally, “patterns [or models] becoming of the flock”). Instead of domineering lords, they themselves must be models their people can follow. As spiritual shepherds they must lead, not drive.

²⁶ Matthew Poole, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, vol. 3: *Matthew—Revelation* (1685; reprint ed., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1979), p.915.

“Proving to be” (*γινόμενοι*) implies conscious effort, for the verb suggests a process of ever more fully becoming worthy examples. Each of them as an elder “must stand out as a distinct representative of the unseen Master to whom he and his people must be conformed.”²⁷ Although each elder works directly with only a portion of the whole flock, the singular noun “the flock” recalls the spiritual unity of all of [p. 120](#) God’s people. Their “tyrannizing could only apply to the portion over which their authority extended, but the good example would be seen and followed by the whole church.”²⁸

THE REWARD OF THE FAITHFUL UNDER-SHEPHERDS

“And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory” ([v.4](#)). “And” (*καὶ*) indicates simple sequence. The leaders’ faithful fulfilling of the negative and positive injunctions set forth in [verses 2b-3](#) will be followed by God’s bestowal of a reward. The prospect of the future must have its impact on their performance in the present. The difficulties of their work, as well as their awareness of their own inadequacies and failures, will often discourage the most prudent; but “to prevent the faithful servant of Christ from being cast down, there is this one and only remedy, to turn his eyes to the coming of Christ.”²⁹

“When the Chief Shepherd appears,” a genitive absolute construction, sets forth the time and circumstances for the bestowal of the reward. “Appears” (*φανερωθέντος*), an aorist passive participle, denotes a single event, the second coming of Christ: when He “has been made manifest, has become invisible” in open splendour. In [1 Peter 1:20](#) this verb was used of Christ’s appearing at His first advent (*cf. 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 9:26; 1 John 1:2*). Here the reference is to His second coming (*cf. Col. 3:4; 1 John 2:25; 3:2b*). The elders’ reward from the returning Lord will involve their open vindication before a Christ-rejecting world.

Christ will return as “the Chief Shepherd” (*τοῦ ἀρχιποίμενος*, “the Arch-Shepherd”), a designation occurring only here in the New Testament. The term, once thought to be Peter’s own coinage, has been found on an Egyptian mummy label in the sense of “master-shepherd.”³⁰ As the “Chief Shepherd” Christ is in charge of the entire flock and all the elders are under-shepherds whose work will be evaluated and rewarded by Him.

Peter assured the elders that when Christ appears “you will receive the unfading crown of glory.” “You” is left unrestricted, thus assuming that the elders being exhorted will faithfully perform their [p. 121](#) duties. The verb “will receive” (*κομιΞσθε*) conveys the thought of getting something for oneself and carrying it off as wages or a prize. In that coming Day they will joyfully carry away as their own “the unfading crown of glory.” The promised “crown” is not the kingly or imperial “crown” (*διάδημα*), the badge of sovereignty ([Rev. 12:3; 19:12](#)), but rather the “crown” (*στέφανος*), the “wreath” or “garland” used on various nonimperial occasions. The term was used of “the crown of victory in the games, of civic worth, of military valour, of nuptial joy, of festive

²⁷ F. C. Cook, “The First Epistle General of Peter,” in *The Speaker’s Commentary, New Testament*, ed. F. C. Cook, 4 vols. (London: John Murray, 1881), 4:216.

²⁸ Henry Alford, *The New Testament for English Readers* (reprint ed., Chicago: Moody Press, n.d.), p.1966.

²⁹ John Calvin, “The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and the First and Second Epistles of St Peter,” *Calvin’s Commentaries*, trans. William B. Johnston (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963), p.317.

³⁰ Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p.82.

gladness.”³¹ Woven of perishable materials, they were used to celebrate occasions of joy or victory. The scene here envisioned may be the festive occasion of a banquet or the crowning after struggle for victorious achievement. For Peter’s readers the crowning which concluded the athletic contests would readily come to mind. This picture is in keeping with the context.

Two modifiers, placed attributively between the article and the noun ($\tauὸν$ $\άμαράντινον$ $\τῆς$ $\δόξης$ $\στέφανον$), further describe the nature of this crown. The adjective rendered “unfading” ($\άμαράντινον$) occurs only here in the New Testament. It differs slightly from the adjective rendered “will not fade away” ($\άμαραντον$) in [1 Peter 1:4](#). The use of this variant form suggests that a somewhat different meaning is intended here. The form used in [1:4](#) points to a quality that will not fade away; the term, using the suffix $-ινον$, points rather to the material from which the thing is made. Then the crown is described as “made of amaranth,” a flower whose unfading quality was the symbol of immortality. In contrast to the flowers of this world, the crown itself is made of material which never loses its beauty and attractiveness.

The crown is further characterized as “of glory” ($\τῆς$ $\δόξης$); the genitive is appositional, identifying its material; the crown consists of “the [heavenly] glory.” After His own suffering, Christ was “crowned with glory and honour” ([Heb. 2:9](#)); He will reward His faithful under-shepherds in having them share in His own unfading glory. Clearly Peter believes that the prospect of a glorious future must motivate faithfulness in the present. Prophetic truth is indeed practical!

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Hugh Latimer: Apostle of England

Philip Thomas

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Lessons on how the Church responds to periods of intense persecution need to be learned by every generation. This brief reflection on the witness of the English reformers Latimer and Ridley in a period of persecution ending with their martyrdom on 16 October 1555 is a challenge to faithfulness to all Christian leaders. The context may change but the test is always with us.

(Editor)

“Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man.
We shall this day, light such a candle, by God’s grace,

³¹ Richard Chenevix Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (1880; reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1947), p.78.

in England, as I trust shall never be put out."

The stake was firmly driven, the faggots placed. As the flames leapt around the two men, Hugh Latimer's last sermon was perhaps his most eloquent and enduring. Those words spoken by the town ditch outside Oxford, about the candle that would never be put out, scored their way into the consciousness of the English people, alongside Nelson's battle signal and Churchill's rallying of a nation at war.

Latimer was born "of good yeoman stock" about the year 1485, and it was as a countryman that he always felt most at ease. As a student at Cambridge his competence and devotion earned recognition by his appointment as ceremonial cross-bearer, and as he was as unmoved by the visit of Erasmus to the University as he was by the "new learning" that he had come to represent. Indeed his zeal was such that he was known for the vigour with which he disputed any hint of the Lutheran heresy which so stirred some of his fellows. After one such dispute, the confession of one of them, Thomas Bilney, so troubled Latimer, that by the end of 1524, he too had concluded that a formal orthodoxy was not enough. What was needed was a personal trust in Christ. "So I began to smell the Word of God," he afterwards recounted, "and forsook the school-doctors and other such fooleries."

This change of heart became quickly obvious, as with Bilney, Latimer energetically undertook to visit the poor, and joined with the little circle at the 'White Horse' who read and discussed the New Testament, and the banned books from Germany. Latimer's thinking did not change all at once. His theology was quite in accord with his superiors, yet this insistence that popular religion should be more than the formal observances of traditional piety unsettled some. As yet he may only "smell of the frying pan" as they put it, yet this raised "doubt ^{p. 123} whereunto this may grow." Before a formal censure could be invoked however, weightier matters were to intervene.

During 1529 Cranmer had been in Cambridge preparing a case to support Henry VIII's claim for a marriage annulment. Latimer's support brought not only an extended preaching licence, but also the invitation to give the Lenten sermons before the king in the following year. Such sermons, Cranmer advised, should be no longer than an hour and a half! In fact most of 1530 Latimer spent at the palace, and then by the royal favour he spent five years as a parish priest. In 1535 he was consecrated Bishop of Worcester.

These were the years of the Reformation Parliament, when under the skilful advocacy of the newly appointed Archbishop, Thomas Cranmer, the realm was gradually brought under the reformed faith. At this time too, there was a ready opening for Latimer's preaching gifts. At court, from parish pulpits, and finally in Convocation, he spoke forcefully for the reforming measures, and levelled his attack against formalism, hypocrisy and superstition of any shade. His sermons show a unique combination of impassioned eloquence and effective raillery; direct, simple, sometimes almost garrulous. "What, ye brain-sick fools, ye hoddy pecks, ye doddy poules, ye healdes, are ye seduced also?" ran his fairly free reading of [John 6:67](#)! He had a stock of good stories, and illustrated his points with relish, not hesitating to draw from his own or his hearer's experiences. The full theological implications of the reform were not yet clear to him, and at times his uncertainties and the need for expediency tortured his conscience. Yet he was wholly for "gospel living" on the basis of a personal trust in Christ and insistent that the Church live by his truth.

Henry's craft brought changing fortunes again. Latimer felt compelled to resign his see, and he spent nearly eight years under house arrest, the last twelve months in the tower. But his greatest work lay yet before him.

During the short reign of Edward VI (1545–51) the flood gates of reform were opened. Latimer's theology was by now fully developed, and with his resolve hardened

by the years of inactivity, he threw himself into the work at hand. He refused to take up his Bishopric again but as Cranmer's aide and confidante he held the pulse of a nation. Those were busy days. His servant recorded that Latimer was at his desk by 2a.m. each morning, three hours before the rest of the household. Each year between 1548 and 1550 he was the Lenten preacher at court, boldly instructing the king in his Christian duties, and pillorying the graft of the courtiers. The clergy who "loved ease" felt the lash of his tongue, and so too did the materialism of the nobles. He was not [p. 124](#) just a "society preacher" either. He enjoyed being a man of the people, and the people gladly heard him, as for two hours at a time he regularly expounded from an open pulpit behind St. Pauls. Whoever his audience Latimer repeatedly returns to the theme of the Gospel, to faith in Christ alone, and the need for justice and the recompense of evil. He takes up the concern of the poor for education and opportunity, and of the farmer for fair dealings with his land. Any suggestion that the church should not speak out on social and political matters would receive little Support from Latimer. His concern was for a pure religion, a personal religion and a national religion.

His outspokenness made him many enemies, yet there is no record of any accusation that he himself failed to live by the high standards of his words. Neither was this increased zeal a matter of time serving under more favourable conditions. He had always spoken when his mind was made up, and even in Edward's time it was a costly thing to stand for the reform; it was already apparent that Mary would soon succeed her ailing half-brother. Such warning simply added urgency to Latimer's task.

If his convictions had formed slowly, by the 1550's they were his own, and it was this firing of Scriptural truth within the crucible of experience which marked Latimer's life. It was not just eloquence or even courage which gave such remarkable power of communication. Preaching was no exercise on behalf of the status quo, but as a letter writer put it, the speech of a dying man to dying men. As he had put it in one of his early Cambridge sermons, Christ was his trump; now the card was played, and the winner would take all. Today we can understand something of the courage which makes a man willing to suffer for an unpopular cause. It is not so easy to appreciate the particular courage of Latimer and the others who were prepared to step aside from the traditions and practices in which men for centuries had sought for eternal security, and stand before God upon the advocacy of Christ alone. Such is always the risk and the urgency of the Gospel.

With Mary's accession came long imprisonment. The stake "has long groaned for me" he observed. If in the past Latimer had been impetuous, if at times he had been slow to act upon his most deeply held beliefs, now that the issues were clear, his faith held like rock. Others in the Tower may have been more nimble in their defence, but they all looked to "Old Father Latimer" for the security of his prayers and spiritual perceptiveness. On the 16th October 1555, with the disputing finished and the long walk over, the fires were kindled. Hugh Latimer, "The apostle of England" as Ridley called him, set the seal to his message with his life. [p. 125](#)

A few months before that day he had written, "Die once we must; how and where we know not ... And let us consider all the dear friends of God, how they have gone after the example of our Saviour Jesus Christ; Whose footsteps let us follow, even to the gallows if God's will so be, not doubting but as He rose again the third day, even so shall we do at the time appointed of God, that is when the trump shall blow, and the angel shall shout, and the Son of Man shall appear."

Role of Spiritual Development in Theological Education

Bruce J. Nicholls

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The author contends that spiritual development is the primary goal of theological education and such development or formation can be evaluated.

INTRODUCTION

In any discussion on the place of spiritual development in theological education we are in danger of narrowing the term 'spiritual' to refer to a private pietistic: direct relationship between ourselves and God. Evangelicalism has drawn deep from the wells of pietism and rightly so, but we must be more careful to understand spirituality in a way that does justice to the totality of Spiritual teaching. On the other hand, we may so broaden the term 'spiritual' that nothing is excluded, and so dilute its meaning. In order to understand the role of spiritual development in theological education we need to begin by first restating the goals of theological education, and by secondly defining the meaning of Spiritual development.

DISCIPLESHIP GOALS FOR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

The goals of theological education must focus on the kind of person we expect the student to become. The aim of theological education is to train men and women in Christian discipleship so that they become truly men and women of God. In his statement on the gifts of the Spirit, Paul aptly describes their purpose as "To prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ" ([Eph. 4:13](#)). In the same passage he goes on to speak of the need for stability to withstand false teaching and to speak God's truth in love, so that as members of one body we may grow up into Christ who is the head.

The marks of discipleship development are many. They include a strong sense of the call of God to ministry, as was the case with both our Lord and Paul, and a call to godliness and holiness of living, so that [p. 127](#) the disciple in humility may be able to say with Paul "follow me, follow my example". We all know from our own student days that the quality of life of the teacher is remembered when the content of what he taught is long forgotten: alas much of it is forgotten within a day after the examination! In his pastoral epistles Paul reminds us of the qualification for being a bishop or elder. He must be blameless, the husband of one wife, one whose children are not wild and disobedient. He must not be overbearing, quick-tempered, given to much wine nor violent, nor pursuing dishonest ways. He must be given to hospitality, be self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must be able to encourage others in sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it ([Tit. 1:5–9](#); [1 Tm. 3:1–7](#)).

These qualities of lifestyle outlined by Paul are themselves grounded in our Lord's interpretation of discipleship as servanthood, as exemplified in his own life and teaching. We remember that on the evening of the final meal together with his disciples, he took a towel and washed their feet, when apparently they were unwilling to wash each other's feet. His question to the disciples as to who is greater, he who sits at the table or he who serves, He Himself answered with the convicting words, "But I am among you as one who serves" ([Luke 22:27](#)). Some days before this event Jesus had said, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be the first must be slave to all. For even the Son of man did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many" ([Mk. 10:43-45](#)).

Another mark of discipleship is growth in the knowledge and wisdom of God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Such knowledge is acquired from an intimate relationship with the living Word of God and an understanding of the written Word of God. The disciple is to be equipped as a workman who correctly handles the Word of God (2 Tim. 2:15) and as one who does not distort it nor use it deceitfully ([2 Cor. 4:27](#)). From this reverent fear and knowledge of God the disciple learns to discern the difference between truth and error and between good and evil. He learns to be able rightly to interpret God's message to the people in the context of their daily lives.

Further, the goal of training the man of God is to bring to maturity his missiological commitment to the proclamation of the Gospel, to the nurture of believers, and to teaching in truth and righteousness; the goal is also to inspire compassionate service for the poor and despised and sick of this world, and also for the rich and those with whom we have cultural affinity. This totality of missiological concern is beautifully modelled for us in the life of our Lord ([Mt. 9:35-38](#)). God [p. 128](#) gives to his people the gifts of the Spirit to be exercised in ministry within the church and without in the world.

These gifts are neither to be equated with natural hereditary gifts, nor to be isolated from each other, but to be exercised in relation to each other. The goal of training a man of God is to help him discern the gifts that the Spirit has given him and to provide the context in which they can be fully developed and exercised. Training for ministry is thus a multifaceted process involving the student, the teacher, and the accumulated knowledge and skills of the church, all under the discipling ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The disciple is to be equipped not only as a spokesman for God and one who exercises the priestly and pastoral care of God's people, but as one with discerning wisdom to lead people in their daily involvement in society, work, and leisure, and in responsible citizenship in the nation. He speaks with a prophetic voice for justice and society.

THEOLOGY OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

We will develop our understanding from three theological perspectives. First, mankind was created in the image of God in order to worship and serve Him forever. In creation we share, in a derived and dependent sense, the attributes of God. Man is eternally personal, with a selfhood which is both one and individual, and yet a shared relational self inseparable from others. As George David notes, "The individual and relational selves are two mutually interdependent dimensions of one selfhood or personhood. There can be no relational self without individuality neither can the individual self have a meaningful existence without any reciprocal relationships whatsoever. For, to become a person one has to share in the being of another" (*The Eclipse and Rediscovery of Person*, New Delhi, p.44f). The harmony of the individual self and the relational self between

man and his creator God makes possible man's reflection on his own selfhood and a rational and coherent understanding of all life.

Further, man was created moral, with a capacity to discern good from evil and to obey or disobey his creator. The Law of God which reflects the character of God is written on his heart, and to this Law his conscience bears witness ([Rom. 2:15](#)). Man in the image of God has the gift of creativity in the secondary sense of being able to form from the created world objects of beauty and manifest truth through art, music and words. He has been given stewardship over nature and called to subdue it to the glory of God. Thus our spirituality extends to [p. 129](#) the circumference of man created in God's image when he acts in conformity with the purposes of God.

Secondly, we know from Scripture and our own experience that this image is marred, defaced and all but destroyed. We are sinners in rebellion against God, using our creative gifts for idolatrous purposes and then becoming slaves of our own creations. We are under the judgement and the wrath of God. We live in the realm of evil and the demonic, knowing that Satan is the ruler of this world. Therefore true spirituality means a true response in heart, mind and body to this fallen world. It includes both attitudes and acts of repentance to God and turning from sin, and of faith in God and turning towards Him and His Law. Spiritual formation must involve the development of a critical knowledge of the world, discerning the cultural accretions to the Gospel whether Western, Asian or African. It includes training in steadfastness, humility and courage to stand as persons, families and communities, against the devil and his ways, in situations of hunger, sickness and death, in persecution and suffering and in cases of demonic possession.

Thirdly, spirituality is experiencing the redeeming work of Christ and the recruiting power of the Holy Spirit. As new men and women in Christ we experience the divine shalom, the health and wholeness that God purposes for his people ([Rom. 5, 2 Cor. 5](#)). Spirituality is harmony in relationship to our Saviour God in worship, love and submission, in relationship to God's people, in witness and servanthood in the world, and stewardship in relationship to nature. The spiritual self is a point in a triangle of body and mind and psyche functioning through these elements of personhood. The psychiatrist Paul Tournier has so well illustrated this in his work, *The Meaning of Persons*.

In conclusion, we recognize that man created in the image of God must not be confused with man made of the dust of the earth, but neither can these two components of his being be isolated from each other. Spirituality then is the relational centre in all our relations with God, mankind and creation.

In light of such an understanding, it is evident that spiritual development cannot be merely a subject within theological education, separate from other subjects. Rather it must be a perspective affecting the whole educative process. We may distinguish at least four contexts in which such a perspective should be manifest.

Curriculum Content for Spiritual Development

We naturally turn first to the curriculum of theological education and [p. 130](#) begin by recognizing that spiritual knowledge is received through the divine propositional Word of God, through experiencing relational knowledge in the human context, and through inner reflection and interpretation of the knowledge of one's selfhood. We may divide the content of theological education into four general but related areas.'

1. *Biblical knowledge*. Spiritual growth takes place in the acquisition of a cognitive knowledge of Scripture, and in the application and interpretation of Scripture to ourselves and to our world. It begins with our basic attitudes to Scripture itself. There is

often a sharp difference between an evangelical understanding of Scripture as the Word of God and a liberal and radical understanding of Scripture as a human document. This becomes a watershed for our understanding of spiritual development in theological education. If we approach biblical knowledge with the confidence that this is the authentic Word of God, and with the desire to love and obey the law of God, we are conditioned to grow in spiritual maturity through this knowledge. But we are all aware from our own experience, and from that of others, that acquiring knowledge of the content of Scripture is no guarantee of spiritual growth. In fact, it can lead to spiritual deadness and to agnosticism.

To understand the Word of God in its own cultural context and to understand its relevance for the cultural context in which we live is also fundamental to spiritual development. In this case, study of the biblical languages, critical reflection on the problems of biblical introduction and culture, and analysis and synthesis of biblical theology, are tools necessary to this exercise in spirituality. I suggest that more emphasis be placed on learning by heart the Scriptures, not only for spiritual nourishment but also for evangelism. This is especially helpful in situations where memory knowledge is highly valued, such as in ministry to the Muslims. The Union Biblical Seminary in Yavatmal (now Pune) India, requires students to learn by heart 25 verses a term. However, the staff have discerned sharp differences among students in the motivation for memorizing for graduation. Integrity in the use of Scripture is a barometer of spiritual maturity.

2. Culture and Society. Our curriculum usually includes courses on cultural anthropology, general knowledge of literature, history and the arts, the study of philosophy, ideologies, religions and sociology. I suspect some evangelical schools are weak in this area because they do not see its significance for spiritual development in discipleship making. Their definition of spirituality is too narrow. We would insist [p. 131](#) that a knowledge of these component areas of culture and society are fundamental to the process of contextualization and to developing the critical moral faculty of evaluating man's response in society.

3. Applied theology. We might expect in the area of applied theology to have courses on dogmatic theology, personal and social ethics, apologetics, church history, missions and ecumenics. Again spiritual development will depend on the way the subjects are taught and studied and on the kind of contextualized reflections. In each subject there must be an attempt to relate the subject to personal life style and daily behaviour.

4. Church ministries. We normally include courses on preaching and homiletics; pastoral care and church administration, Christian education and the use of the traditional and modern communications media. Here too spiritual formation will take place in the orientation of the subject matter and in relating theory to practice.

The seminar approach to learning and the use of case studies are pedagogical methods that increase the potential for a spiritual orientation in every subject in the curriculum. They open up the possibility for a teacher-student relationship, in which both acknowledge that they are learners in God's school of discipleship. The concept of working with small groups is essential to this approach. Detmar Schunamann summarized educational goals in the prayer of Samuel Chadwick, 'Lord, make us truly spiritual, perfectly natural, thoroughly practical' ('How can we sharpen campus spiritual life?' *Asia Theological News*, July/September 1981, p.8).

Resident Communities for Discipleship

The extent to which a residential theological school is a community for discipleship training determines the potential for spiritual development to take place. Seen as a community of faith, such a school is able to bring the whole of its corporate life to a disciplined lifestyle that reflects the nature of the church itself. The focal point of a residential community ought to be worship. This will be expressed through the personal devotional life of the members of the community, through worship together in chapel services at least once a day, and through informal and planned student meetings for prayer. Days of prayer and meditation, preferably once a term, and special retreats at the beginning of the academic year or with the graduating class prior to graduation, are also important elements in this spiritual development of the [p. 132](#) community. Such a community of faith should include regular counselling programmes involving staff with students, and students with students. Many schools have a weekly fellowship period when a staff member meets with a small group of students throughout a whole year. Counselling also takes place in the homes of staff and students, formally and informally. In this area staff wives may take a major role in spiritual formation. The activities of the community also involve their social life, including student conduct in the dining room, in the hostels, on the sports field, in meetings of the student association, and in other extracurricular activities. These provide training grounds in spirituality. The principle of the whole community functioning through small study and reflection groups opens up possibilities for in-depth relatedness in mutual spirituality.

Local Church in Spiritual Development

If the local church is seen as the baseline for theological training, then any programme of theological education must ensure that a balance is maintained between classroom activity and involvement in the life of one or more local churches. There are many advantages for a student who serves as a student pastor in a local church during his years of training. This ensures that he develops inner discipline in maintaining at the same time both academic study and evangelistic and pastoral ministries, a discipline he will need very much after graduation. Where this is not practical, students should be assigned to a local church for Sunday, and preferably one other day a week, for practical ministry under the guidance of the local pastor and elders. A staff member of the school may also be involved as a resource person. I suggest the ideal is to have classes on four days a week, with two days given to a local church and one for rest, renewal and private study. In some schools it is possible to have a full-time supervisor of practical training, who may also serve as chaplain or counsellor for the whole school.

Many schools focus on concentrated periods of ministry with local churches, often one or two weeks at a time, and during the longer vacations when students are assigned to pastoral ministries. The concept of a year of internship upon the completion of academic training is to be encouraged. We are all aware that the pastoral and teaching care given to a new graduate in his first year or two in the ministry may be as important as the spiritual training in the school itself. A high percentage of failure in the Christian ministry, takes place in the first two years of ministry. Further, the continuing education of [p. 133](#) ministers, especially during the first five years of ministry, through short courses and retreats, is of great importance. If a student's term of training extends to four years or more, then it is highly desirable that he be assigned to a local church or house group or para-church agency for ministry for one year within his total period of training. Group participation in church ministries is also to be encouraged. The Madras Bible Seminary in India expects its student body as a whole to plant two new churches every year and to provide the pastoral care for them.

The World as the Context for Spiritual Development

Evangelicals have pioneered and developed Theological Education by Extension (TEE) as an effective means for training discipleship-makers, who study while at the same time maintaining their secular employment and their ministry in their local church or para-church organization. The value of TEE is that it can be adapted to training for voluntary ministries of many kinds in a local church. It enables a local church to become a bible school. Co-operation between a residential school and a TEE programme is to be encouraged, so that extension students can benefit periodically from the corporate life of an institution, and those in residential programmes can spend periods of study while living in the secular world. TEE must be seen as an extension of both the school and the church.

Some schools, particularly in India, have assigned students to live off campus either in a dense housing estate or in slum huts for an academic term. Food is sometimes taken from low class eating houses. This identity with the poor in their living leads to new styles of spirituality. Worship without the luxury of privacy, or study in the context of people who are illiterate, brings a kind of praxis into theological education that awakens a new understanding of compassion, an identity with the poor and deprived. Our Lord trained his disciples in the context of healing the sick, feeding the hungry, cleansing the lepers, and dining with prostitutes and tax collectors. The misunderstandings inherent in such ministries become, in effect, agents for spiritual growth in discipleship. Similarly evangelistic teams which for shorter periods of time live in the villages will experience new levels of spirituality. Jesus' instructions for such ministry are very clear, practical and embarrassing ([Mt. 10:1-20](#)).

Many religious cultures idealize the model of the teacher-disciple relationship, where the lifestyle of the guru as well as his teaching is to be emulated and faithfully followed by the disciple. This was our [p. 134](#) Lord's own model of teaching the twelve during his three years of ministry. It was on-the-job training in spirituality, involving teaching, preaching and compassionate service. It ensured a high level of commitment. It stood the test of persecution and suffering. Its implication for today is that the teacher-student ratio should be kept as low as possible and a continuity of personal relationship encouraged between the teacher and the student.

Tools for Evaluating Spiritual Development

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of making spiritual development integral to a programme of theological education is in the area of evaluation. We recognize that evaluating the spiritual growth of a student is inherently subjective and can be easily misunderstood. Yet a theological programme cannot recognize its achievement or lack of achievement in this vital area without some effective form of evaluation.

Evangelical accrediting agencies are rightly emphasizing that spiritual development is an integral part of accreditation, that it is as important as cognitive knowledge and communication skills. The student's spiritual development must be a fundamental factor in determining his preparedness for receiving the theological degree or diploma at the end of his course. The student who has failed in this area of spiritual development should have the granting of his degree or diploma postponed. This is particularly necessary in areas of ethical misdemeanour such as cheating in an examination, mishandling of money, or sexual laxity. Failure in these areas should be approached through pastoral care and counselling. Once such a person is ordained into the ministry he may become a stumbling block to the spiritual growth of others throughout his life. It would be unwise to grade a person in spirituality in the same way as we grade a course.

It would be better to grade him as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Unsatisfactory would be considered failure. Many schools offering a three or four year programme enrol students for an initial one or two years. The students then reapply for admission to the final years. This creates the opportunity to terminate the training of those students felt to be unsuitable for the high calling of Christian service.

I suggest that tools for the measurement of spirituality, can be developed which, when taken together, evidence an over-all picture of satisfactory or unsatisfactory training. These include:

1. Self-evaluation questionnaires and reports. Such questionnaires need to be carefully designed and might be completed by the student [p. 135](#) every term. They might be considered confidential to the office of the school, if necessary. The philosophy of accreditation is grounded on the principle of self-evaluation. Likewise the student's graduation begins with his self-evaluation of his spiritual progress during training. While such questionnaires are open to falsification, there are other tools of evaluation which can indicate the degrees of integrity of the student. For example, examination questions may include questions where the student is required to relate his knowledge of the subject to his own life. Again writing up case studies and research projects will reveal as much about the student as they do about the subject of his investigation.

2. Reports on counselling. The school chaplain or staff advisors should meet regularly with the students assigned to them for counselling sessions and reports on those might be compiled. Again, the leaders of student groups or student organizations may be requested to report on their fellow-students' growth, stagnation or decline in spirituality. Further, the pastor and elders of the local church with whom the students have worked, or the supervisor of the field activity, should be requested to fill in an appropriate questionnaire. Such reports may grade the student 1 to 5 with 3 as satisfactory. Compiling these reports over the student's whole period of study, even preparing a graph of each student's progress, will enable the staff finally to grade the student satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Such action should be the action of the whole staff. Thus the degree of objectivity in evaluating the student's spiritual development can be as reliable as the grading of an examination paper. A degree of subjectivity cannot be eliminated in evaluating spiritual development any more than it can be from the system of written examinations.

We may conclude that spiritual development is the primary goal of theological education, that spirituality is an essential element in commending men and women for ministry, and that such spiritual development can be adequately evaluated.

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Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education

I.C.A.A.

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This manifesto has been prepared by the International Council of Accrediting Agencies for evangelical theological education for use by member bodies; through it ICAA seeks to declare publicly its commitment to renewal and to set a direction in pursuing such renewal. The manifesto 'is not meant to express everything that might need changing but only those points on which there appears to be wide consent'.

(Editor)

[ICAA at its meetings in Malawi in 1981 directed that a 'Manifesto on the Renewal of Evangelical Theological Education' be drawn up for consideration by the ICAA Council, and eventual finalization, endorsement, and publication. A draft version was produced by a panel of consultants representing ICAA's broad international constituency, and submitted to the ICAA Council meeting in Korea. The Council directed that it be referred to member agencies for comment, and further revised, in time for consideration at the 1983 meetings in Wheaton. The following revised draft has resulted from this process.

The fundamental presupposition of the 'Manifesto' is the perception that today there is a wide agreement among evangelical theological educators on the need for renewal in theological education and on an agenda for such renewal. The strategic purpose of the 'Manifesto' itself is to reinforce this agreement and give it a cutting edge by a vivid and forceful assertion of its essential points. For just this reason the 'Manifesto' is *not* meant to express everything that might need changing, but only those leading points on which there appears to be wide consent. Through the 'Manifesto' ICAA seeks to declare publicly its commitment to renewal, and gain for itself and others a visible sense of direction in pursuing such renewal].

INTRODUCTION

We who serve within evangelical theological education throughout the world today, and who find ourselves now linked together in growing international co-operation, wish to give united voice to our longing and prayer for the renewal of evangelical theological education today—for a renewal in form and in substance, a renewal in vision and power, a renewal in commitment and direction. **P. 137**

We rightly seek such renewal in light of the pivotal significance of theological education in biblical perspective. Insofar as theological education concerns the formation of leadership for the church of Christ in its mission, to that extent theological education assumes a critically strategic biblical importance. Scripture mandates the church, it mandates leadership service within that church, and it thereby as well mandates a vital concern with the formation of such leadership. For this reason the quest for effective renewal in evangelical theological education in our day is a biblically generated quest.

We rightly seek such renewal in light also of the crisis of leadership in the Church of Christ around the world. The times are weighted with unusual challenge and unusual opportunity, demanding of the Church exceptional preparation of its leadership. In many areas the Church is faced with surging growth, of such proportions that it cannot always cope. In many areas the Church is also faced with open hostility without and hidden subversion within, distracting and diverting it from its calling. Everywhere the opportunities and challenges take on new and confusing forms. The times demand an urgent quest for the renewal of theological educational patterns, that the Church in its leadership may be equipped to fulfil its high calling under God.

We rightly seek such renewal also in light of the condition of evangelical theological education in our day. We recognize among ourselves exciting examples of that renewed vitality in theological education which we desire to see everywhere put to the service of our Lord. Things are being done right, within traditional patterns and within non-traditional patterns, which need attention, encouragement, and emulation. We also recognize that there are examples in our midst, usually all too close at hand, where things are not being done right. We confess this with shame. Traditional forms are being maintained only because they are traditional, and radical forms pursued only because they are radical—and the formation of effective leadership for the Church of Christ is deeply hindered. We heartily welcome the wise critiques of evangelical theological education which have arisen in recent times, which have forced us to think much more carefully both about our purposes in theological education and about the best means for achieving those purposes. We believe that there is now emerging around the world a wide consensus among evangelical theological educators that a challenge to renewal is upon Us, and upon us from our Lord. We believe that there is also emerging a broad agreement on the central patterns that such a renewal should take. New times are upon us, and new opportunities. We wish to pursue those opportunities, and seize them, in obedience to our Lord. [p. 138](#)

Therefore, in order to provide encouragement, guidance, and critical challenge to ourselves and to all others who may look to us for direction, we wish to assert and endorse the following agenda for the renewal of evangelical theological education world-wide today, and to pledge ourselves to its practical energetic implementation. We do not pretend to ourselves that we are here setting forth either a full or a final word on these matters. But we do make this expression after extended prayerful reflection, and we wish to offer the hand of warm friendship to all those who may likewise feel led to endorse these proposals, and express to them an invitation to practical collaboration in this quest, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord, the evangelization of the world, and the establishment and edification of the Church.

Therefore, we now unitedly affirm that, to fulfil its God-given mandate, evangelical theological education today world-wide must vigorously seek to introduce and reinforce—

1. Contextualization

Our programmes of theological education must be designed with deliberate reference to the contexts in which they serve. We are at fault that our curricula so often appear either to have been imported whole from abroad, or to have been handed down unaltered from the past. The selection of courses for the curriculum, and the content of every course in the curriculum, must be specifically suited to the context of service. To become familiar with the context in which the biblical message is to be lived and preached is no less vital to a well-rounded programme than to become familiar with the content of that biblical message. Indeed, not only in what is taught, but also in structure and operation our theological programmes must demonstrate that they exist in and for their own specific context, in government and administration, in finance, in reading styles and class assignments in library resources and student services. This we must analyze by God's grace.

2. Churchward orientation

Our programmes of theological education must orient themselves pervasively in terms of the Christian community being served. We are at fault when our programmes operate merely in terms of some traditional or personal notion of theological education. At every

level of design and operation our programmes must be visibly determined by a close attentiveness to the needs and expectations of the Christian [p. 139](#) community we serve. To this end we must establish multiple modes of ongoing contact and interaction between programme and church, both at official and at grass-roots levels, and regularly adjust and develop the programme in light of these contacts. Our theological programmes must become manifestly of the Church, through the Church, and for the Church. This we must accomplish, by God's grace.

3. Strategic flexibility

Our programmes of theological education must nurture a much greater strategic flexibility in carrying out their task. Too long we have been content to serve the formation of only one type of leader for the church, at only one level of need, by only one educational approach. If we are to serve fully the leadership needs of the body of Christ, then our programmes singly and in combination, must begin to demonstrate much greater flexibility in at least three respects. First, we must attune ourselves to the full range of leadership *roles* required, and not attend only to the most familiar or most basic. To provide for pastoral formation, for example, is not enough. We must respond creatively, in co-operation with other programmes, to the church's leadership needs also in areas such as Christian education, youth work, evangelism, journalism and communications, TEE, counselling, denominational and para-church administration, seminary and Bible school staffing, community development, and social outreach. Secondly, our programmes must learn to take account of all academic levels of need, and not become frozen in serving only one level. We must not presume that the highest level of training is the only strategic need, nor conversely that the lowest level is the only strategic need. We must deliberately participate in multi-level approaches to leadership training, worked out on the basis of an assessment of the Church's leadership needs as a whole at all levels. Thirdly, we must embrace a greater flexibility in the educational *modes* by which we touch the various levels of leadership need, and not limit our approach to a single traditional or radical pattern. We must learn to employ, in practical combination with others, both residential and extension systems, both formal and non-formal styles, as well, for example, as short term courses, workshops, night school programmes, vacation institutes, in-service training, travelling seminars, refresher courses, and continuing education programmes. Only by such flexibility in our programmes can the Church's full spectrum of leadership needs begin to be met, and we ourselves become true to our full mandate. This we must accomplish, by God's grace. [p. 140](#)

4. Theological grounding

Evangelical theological education as a whole today needs earnestly to pursue and recover a thorough-going theology of theological education. We are at fault that we so readily allow our bearings to be set for us by the latest enthusiasms, or by secular rationales, or by sterile traditions. It is not sufficient that we attend to the context of our service, and to the Christian community being served. We must come to perceive our task, and even these basic points of reference, within the larger setting of God's total truth and God's total plan. Such a shared theological perception of our calling is largely absent from our midst. We must together take immediate and urgent steps to seek, elaborate, and possess a biblically-informed theological basis for our calling in theological education, and allow every aspect of our service to become rooted and nurtured in this soil. This we must accomplish by God's grace.

5. Continuous assessment

Our programme of theological education must be dominated by a rigorous practice of identifying objectives, assessing outcomes, and adjusting programmes accordingly. We have been too easily satisfied with educational intentions that are unexpressed, or only superficially examined, or too general to be of directional use. We have been too ready to assume our achievements on the basis of vague impressions, chance reports, or crisis-generated inquiries. We have been culpably content with evaluating our programme only irregularly, or haphazardly, or under stress. We hear our Lord's stern word of the faithful stewardship He requires in His servants, but we have largely failed to apply this to the way we conduct our programmes of theological education. First, we must let our programmes become governed by objectives carefully chosen, clearly defined, and continuously reviewed. Secondly, we must accept it as a duty, and not merely as beneficial, to discern and evaluate the results of our programmes, so that there may be a valid basis for judging the degree to which intentions are being achieved. This requires that we institute means of reviewing the actual performance of our graduates in relation to our stated objectives. Thirdly, we must build into the normal operational patterns of our programmes a regular review and continual modification and adjustment of all aspects of governance, staffing, educational programme, facilities, and student services, so that actual achievements might be brought to approximate more and more closely our [p. 141](#) stated objectives. Only by such provisions for continuous assessment can we be true to the rigorous demands of biblical stewardship. This we must accomplish, by God's grace.

6. Community life

Our programmes of theological education must demonstrate the Christian pattern of community. We are at fault that our programmes so often seem little more than Christian academic factories, efficiently producing graduates. It is biblically incumbent on us that our programmes function as deliberately nurtured Christian educational communities, sustained by those modes of community that are biblically commended and culturally appropriate. To this end it is not merely decorative but biblically essential that the whole educational body, staff and students, not only learn together, but play and eat and care and worship and work together. This we must accomplish, by God's grace.

7. Integrated programme

Our programmes of the theological education must combine spiritual and practical with academic objectives in one holistic integrated educational approach. We are at fault that we so often focus educational requirements narrowly on cognitive attainments, while we hope for student growth in other dimensions but leave it largely to chance. Our programmes must be designed to attend to the growth and equipping of the whole man of God. This means, firstly, that our educational programmes must deliberately seek and expect the spiritual formation of the student. We must look for a spiritual development centered in total commitment to the Lordship of Christ, progressively worked outward by the power of the Spirit into every department of life. We must devote as much time and care and structural designing to facilitate this type of growth as we readily and rightly provide for cognitive growth. This also means, secondly, that our programmes must seek and expect achievement in the practical skills of Christian leadership. We must not any longer only introduce these skills within a classroom setting. We must incorporate into our educational arrangements and requirements a guided practical field experience in precisely those skills which the student will need to employ in service

after completion of the programme. We must provide adequately supervised and monitored opportunities for practical vocational field experience. We must blend practical and spiritual with academic in [p. 142](#) our educational programmes, and thus equip the whole man of God for service. This we must accomplish, by God's grace.

8. Servant moulding

Through our programmes of theological education students must be moulded to styles of leadership appropriate to their intended biblical role within the body of Christ. We are to be blamed that our programmes so readily produce the characteristics of elitism, and so rarely produce the characteristics of servanthood. We must not merely hope that the true marks of Christian servanthood will appear. We must actively promote biblically-approved styles of leadership, through modelling by the staff, and through active encouragement, practical exposition, and deliberate reinforcement. This we must accomplish, by God's grace.

9. Instructional variety

Our programmes of theological education must vigorously pursue the use of a variety of educational teaching methodologies, evaluated and promoted in terms of their demonstrated effectiveness, especially with respect to the particular cultural context. It is not right to become fixed in one method merely because it is traditional, or familiar, or even avant-garde. Lecturing is by no means the only appropriate teaching method, and frequently by no means the best. Presumably neither is programmed instruction. Our programmes need to take practical steps to introduce and train their staff in new methods of instruction, in a spirit of innovative flexibility and experimentation, always governed by the standard of effectiveness.

10. A Christian mind

Our programmes of theological education need much more effectively to model and inculcate a pattern of holistic thought, that is openly and wholesomely centered around biblical truth as the integrating core of reality. It is not enough merely to teach an accumulation of theological truths. Insofar as every human culture is governed at its core by an integrating worldview, our programmes must see that the rule of our Lord is planted effectively at that point in the life of the student. This vision of the theologically integrated life needs to be so lived and taught in our programmes that we may say and show in a winsomely biblical manner that theology does indeed matter, and [p. 143](#) students may go forth experiencing this centering focus in all its biblical richness and depth. This we must accomplish, by God's grace.

11. Equipping for growth

Our programmes of theological education need urgently to refocus their patterns of training toward encouraging and facilitating self-directed learning. It is not enough that through our programmes we bring a student to a state of preparedness for ministry. We need to design academic requirements so that we are equipping the student not only to complete the course but also for a lifetime of ongoing learning and development and growth. To this end we must also assume a much greater role in the placement of our students, as part of our proper duty, and experiment in ways of maintaining ongoing supportive links and services with the student after graduation, especially in the early years of ministry. By these means each student should come to experience through the

programme not the completion of a development but the launching of an ongoing development. This we must accomplish, by God's grace.

12. Cooperation

Our programmes of theological education must pursue contact and collaboration among themselves, for mutual support, encouragement, edification, and cross-fertilization. We are at fault that so often in evangelical theological education we attend merely to our own assignments under God. Others in the same calling need us; and we need them. The biblical notion of mutuality needs to be much more visibly expressed and pragmatically pursued among our theological programmes. Too long we have acquiesced in an isolation of effort that denies the larger body of Christ, thus failing both ourselves and Christ's body. The times in which we serve, no less than biblical expectations, demand of each of us active ongoing initiatives in cooperation. This we must accomplish, by God's grace.

May God help us to be faithful to those affirmations and commitments, to the glory of God and for the fulfilment of His purpose.

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Book Reviews

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David Baily Harned, [*Creed and Personal Identity: The Meaning of the Apostles Creed*](#)

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C. George Fry & James R. King, [*Islam: A Survey of the Muslim Faith*](#)

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MISSION AND EVANGELISM

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Faith and Church

THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS, A COMMENTARY ON THE GREEK TEXT

by F. F. Bruce
(Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1982)
Pp.xx, 305, A\$23.50

Abstract of a review by Peter O'Brien in *The Reformed Theological Review*, Vol XLII, No. 2, May-August, 1983.

After hearing Professor Bruce in November 1968 deliver the first of his five John Rylands Library lectures in Manchester on Paul's Letter to the Galatians, and subsequently learning that he was preparing a commentary on the Greek text of that Pauline epistle, I looked forward in anticipation to its advent. The final product more than fulfils one's expectations, and I consider it is the finest commentary written in English on Galatians for the minister and serious student. Professor Bruce's volume shows that the "New International Greek Testament Commentary" is an important series of large scale commentaries on the New Testament. This present volume is a model of clarity and great learning, revealing the touch of a master, and I found it invaluable in the preparation of a series of sermons on Galatians.

A 56-page introduction tackles the major issues relating to Galatians, including: the place of the letter among the epistles of Paul, the churches of Galatia (after a careful assessment Professor Bruce opts for the "South Galatian" theory); the date of the letter (which he regards as early, thus making it the first of the Pauline letters in our canon); and its setting in the narrative context of Acts. Professor Bruce identifies Paul's opponents as "judaizers" (who brought "another gospel" with its insistence on circumcision and the observance of special days as pre-requisites for being authentic

Christians). He convincingly maintains this against several German and American scholars who see a “gnostic” presence in Galatians.

Second, an outline structure of Galatians is provided and the author rightly raises questions about Hans Dieter Betz’s analysis of Galatians in which Paul’s letter is thought to have been constructed according to the canon of the rhetorical schools.

Apart from the indexes (pp. 279–305) the remainder of the volume, as one would expect, is taken up with detailed comments on the Greek text of Paul’s letter. The layout is clear and easy to follow: Galatians is divided into eight major sections, and a summary of the apostle’s [p. 146](#) argument and teaching is helpfully provided. Next, paragraphs and smaller divisions within the major section are isolated and within these Professor Bruce’s translation of the Greek text is set out. Textual variants, based on the third edition of The Greek New Testament published by the United Bible Societies (1975), are then set out prior to the author’s detailed verse-by-verse comments. References to the relevant secondary literature are interspersed throughout the commentary proper.

This is an outstanding commentary and is a “must” for everyone who wants to understand the meaning of Paul’s “capital” letter to the Galatians.

PAUL’S USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

by E. Earle Ellis

(Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1981), Pp. xii, 204, \$7.95

A review by I. Howard Marshall in *The Evangelical Quarterly* Vol. LV, No. 1 January, 1983.

When Dr Ellis published his Edinburgh Ph.D thesis in 1957 under the imprint of Oliver and Boyd, it was at once recognised as a work of unusual worth and has become a standard survey of its subject. The author discussed the general principles of Paul’s use of the Old Testament and the individual problems raised by it in a systematic and detailed manner, and he was one of the first scholars to harvest the insights that can be developed for New Testament study from the comparable phenomena in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Extensive tables of Paul’s citations enhanced the usefulness of the book as a tool for further study.

Now a quarter of a century later research into the subject has not stood still, and the results of some of Professor Ellis’s further studies can be seen in his more recent collection of essays, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic*. But his first book has not lost its value in any way, and, although the author might want to express some things differently today, the original book is still an indispensable introduction to the topic. It is, therefore, with real gratitude that we greet this unchanged reprint of the original edition from the Baker Book House; it is excellent news that this important work is once again available at a very reasonable price. [p. 147](#)

Theology and Culture

CREED AND PERSONAL IDENTITY. THE MEANING OF THE APOSTLES’ CREED

by David Baily Harned

(Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1987), Pp. 120, £5.50.

Abstract of a review by John Webster in *Themelios*, Vol. 9, No. 1, September, 1983.

One of the most encouraging features of the current theological scene is the growing number of imaginative re-statements of some of the foundational aspects of credal orthodoxy. Of this trend, Harned's exposition of the Apostles' Creed is a recent and outstanding example. Elegantly and sensitively written, it is difficult but not obscure, and never dull. As such, it provides the reader with a great deal of matter for reflections.

Harned works with a couple of basic convictions. The first is that the creed offers, not simply a summary of Christian doctrinal commitments, but rather an *identity-description* of the people of God. That is, it is through the creed that the individual Christian's sense of personal identity and the Christian community's sense of corporate identity are formed. The creed recites *who* the Christian in the Church *is*, *who* he has *become* through the grace of God in Christ. His second conviction is that the creed is that essentially narrative in form, that it is concerned not so much with ideas as with deeds, and above all with the particular human life of Jesus. Image and story are to be preferred to concept and proposition.

From this basis, the author treats the credal articles in turn, seeking to show how the Christian sense of selfhood is given by attention to the objective verities of which the creed speaks. Perhaps the most impressive section here is that treating the Christological article, where the author's approach is especially well suited to the material. But throughout the study I found myself pausing frequently to ponder an especially striking phrase or paragraph.

It is, however, the main lines of Harned's approach which should stimulate most discussion. Perhaps two comments may guide the thinking of prospective readers.

First, the author should cause us to think hard and long about the relation of 'objective' truth to 'subjective' human situations. He is firm in the conviction that the creed's avowal of identity is more significant than its articulation of a belief-system. But he is equally firmly [p. 148](#) convinced that the Christian's identity is formed by what is other than his selfhood: by the objective reality of God.

Second, the book should cause us to consider the role of the propositional and argumentative in Christian theology. Such forms have nearly always held the ascendancy in theological work, whereas Harned feels them to be derivative and secondary in comparison with the images and stories presented in the creed. This, indeed, may well be the book's weakness.

Harned's book is not for the beginner: it assumes familiarity with some fairly complex conceptuality and vocabulary, and refers implicitly to scholarly literature on matters of literary theory and identity-description. But: read simply as a reflection upon the meaning of the creed for Christian existence in the world, it is a splendid book.

ISLAM: A SURVEY OF THE MUSLIM FAITH

by C. George Fry and James R. King
(Grand Rapids: Baker House, 1982), Pp. 145

Abstract of a review by Colin Chapman in *The Near East School of Theology Theological Review*, Volume 2, November, 1982.

This book could be an ideal basic text for a course on Islam in any college or seminary. In brief compass, two American college professors, George Fry and James King, introduce us to most of the subjects which need to be covered in any introductory course.

The first chapter seeks to “introduce to Western readers what many observers have felt to be the single most important feature of Islam, that sense of the unity of all things under God with which Muslims confront experience”. This is followed by a chapter on the geographical setting of Islam, which gives an over-view of Muslim communities all over the world. Chapter 3 is an excellent summary of the life of the Prophet, while chapter 4 and 5 cover basic Muslim beliefs and practices. Chapter 6 on ‘Islam and the Arts’ is a salutary reminder that we should not think of Islam purely in terms of dogmatic beliefs. The main sects and schisms within Islam are described in chapter 7, and the book ends on a more practical note with a chapter entitled ‘Christianity and Islam: Models for Contact’.

While this book will no doubt answer many of the questions of a western college student, there are two particular areas in which the Middle-Eastern student may not feel entirely satisfied. The first is in the area of politics. The book was written just before and during the seizure of the American hostages in Tehran in 1979. One might therefore [p. 149](#) have expected that if one whole chapter is devoted to Islam and the arts, there might have been some similar appreciation of Islam as a political force. How is the Christian community in the Middle East to come to terms with Islam—not only theologically, but also sociologically and politically?

A second area of possible difficulty is the last chapter which discusses models for contact between Christianity and Islam. The authors reject proselytising, syncretism, avoidance of contact and dialogue and ‘the determination to extend the church at all costs’. They also question the attempt ‘to proclaim the gospel by handing out tracts and broadcasting radio messages’.

What do the authors suggest as an alternative? ‘A far more adequate strategy grows from an interpretation of “the Word” not as a code phrase, but as the source of vitality, new life, rebirth of spirit which are felt when one heeds the call of Christ to commitment to new values, to growth and change, to love. In short, we believe, faith must discourse with faith: each faith must talk, each faith must listen. Fortunately, there is much to talk about ...’.

The Christian student who has grown up in the Muslim world needs to read a book of this kind written by outside observers to help him to look at Islam more objectively. But he may need to look elsewhere for guidance about how to live with his Muslim neighbours and how to communicate with them.

Mission and Evangelism

EVANGELISM AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: AN EVANGELICAL COMMITMENT

The Grand Rapids Report

(Exeter, Paternoster Press 1982), Pp. 64, £1.00

The Grand Rapids Report (on behalf of The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization and the World Evangelical Fellowship).

Abstract of a review by Rev. Dr. Andrew Kirk in *Churchman*, Vol. 97, No. 1, 1983. [p. 150](#)

Most reports coming out of international consultation have obvious strengths and weaknesses. This one is no exception. Positively, it covers a lot of ground in a short space. There are few stones in the area of Christian responsibility which have not been overturned.

The subject matter, studied by fifty-one evangelical leaders from many parts of the globe, has been considered for a long time amongst evangelical Christians as a very difficult match to apply. The team which met together are to be congratulated for grappling bravely with the majority of the real issues, both theological and practical. They covered an impressive amount of ground in the six days they were together.

The report is divided into six main sections. The first two are brief calls to world evangelization and social responsibility respectively. The next section there sets about trying to relate evangelism to social responsibility.

The following two sections ('The Good News of the Kingdom' and 'History and Eschatology') are the most deeply theological, whilst the final one ('Guidelines for Action') is eminently practical. The report ends with a highly appropriate call to obedience.

As John Stott (the chairman of the drafting committee) says in his foreword, it is almost impossible to remain in entrenched positions, continuing to hold on to stereotypes, fed by prejudices and false assumptions about other brethren, when one has to meet them personally and confront their arguments face to face.

In some areas there has been much activity; I would particularly commend the 'Guidelines' section—included are a number of very creative suggestions. Other areas got bogged down: e.g., in the section on the kingdom, out of forty-six biblical quotations only two are from the OT—a typical evangelical deficiency, I fear.

There are two further comments I would like to make. First, the distinction made between evangelism and social responsibility is an assumption from which everything else in the report flows. Though the report relates them very closely (two blades of a pair of scissors, two wings of a bird), even considers that they overlap, they are not to be identified. Curiously, in spite of insisting on the distinction in one section, the report comes very close to identifying them in another (e.g., the top of p.46).

Secondly, therefore, I believe the report manifests what is sometimes true amongst Christians: that our experience, arising out of our practice, is ahead of our theological constructions.

The report manifests a highly commendable and urgent desire not to put asunder what God has joined together. [p. 151](#)

CHRIST OUTSIDE THE GATE: MISSION BEYOND CHRISTENDOM

by Orlando Costas

(Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1982), \$12.95

Reviewed by Dr. Ashish Chrispal.

As a writer of many articles, and three major works: *The Church and its Mission: A Shattering Critique from the Third World* (1974), *Theology of the Cross Roads in Contemporary Latin America* (1976) and *The Integrity of Mission; The Inner Life and Outreach of the Church* (1979), Costas adds to his credit this, another book but with a difference. He brings a new way of doing theology in missions. Though it is a collection of essays ranging from contextualization, sin and salvation, understanding, church growth, missionary movements, understanding of mission, Liberation theologies and meaning of evangelism, there is a coherence and smoothness. He deals with every aspect of the contemporary debate on mission succinctly and in a manner which is balanced as

well as provocative. He very effectively blends together evangelism, scholarship and liberation. He brings together the WCC circles and the evangelicals as well as the northern and southern hemisphere in such a way that only a non-committed person would react to his proposition to look at both missions theology and christology from the viewpoint of those who live in the periphery of society. He appeals to missions to let the marginalized be the subject as well as the objects of the missions and for North America to become a receiving country within the 1980s.

This book will surely raise the eyebrows of some, while others may question or vehemently reject his way of creating dialogue between the Word and the World.

Therefore for Costas contextualization takes place at the cutting edge between the Word and the World. Sin and salvation are the very keys for the Christian mission but only in their biblical, personal and social meanings. One without the other will leave the totality of God's love, Christ's suffering and the power of the Spirit untouched and the root and impact of sin intact. The Church needs growth, numerical and organic. It is a sign and not an instrument of mission. Further he brings together the prayer of Melbourne and the question of Pattaya in such a dialogue that the church is called to rethink its commitment to both sacrificial service and proclamation. Costas asks whether the church today is a servant church, an apostolic agent outside the Gate of a comfortable and secure church compound or does it continue to opt for the structures of Christendom? The church needs to see [p. 152](#) beyond Christ's death and resurrection to the new creation which Christ's transforming power mediates. Indeed Christ died outside the Gate to bring the periphery to the very centre as a new place of salvation. This book ought to be read by all who take mission seriously.

Ethics and Society

EVANGELICALS AND DEVELOPMENT: TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Edited by Ronald Sider

Contemporary Issues in Social Ethics Vol. 2.
(Exeter, Paternoster Press, 1981), Pp. 123, £3.40

Abstract of a review by Bruce Kaye in *Churchman*, Volume 96, No. 3, 1982.

This book is another sign of the increasing interest in social questions amongst evangelicals around the world. Ronald Sider, in his general preface to the series, puts it this way: "In all parts of the world, evangelical Christians in growing numbers are rediscovering the biblical summons to serve the poor, minister to the needy, correct injustices and seek societal shalom". The papers that we have in this book arose from the consultation which was held in England at Hoddesdon in March 1980. It is interesting that while not denying or seeking in any way to denigrate the activism of evangelical relief agencies, this group wants actually to engage in a theological task. That undoubtedly augers well but could be very explosive within evangelicalism. The discussion of ethical issues, particularly when that discussion is conducted in an

international framework, will raise sharp questions about the essential theological character of evangelicalism.

All the papers are most stimulating and interesting. Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden have written two on development, the first being a guide to the theology of development and the second entitled "Towards a Theology of Social Change". The first is a very interesting and useful guide to the discussion. There is some very good thumbnail sketching in both papers, drawing attention to the considerable diversity which many in the European context may perhaps be unaware of within the developing countries. Tom Sine provides in [p. 153](#) chapter 4 a programmatic discussion of development, and in the last paper Ron Matthews of India looks at implications of western theologies of development for Third World countries. This in many ways is one of the most interesting papers in the book. It touches on issues which will undoubtedly hurt, as we try and think about the questions that are involved here. How far is it to be expected that a development programme which originates from a Christianity which enjoys a particular social position in the European or First World, is going to achieve, or can be reasonably expected to achieve, social change in the Third World? Not just social change, but social change which is itself critical of the social situation in the First World. The transposition of thinking about aid and development from one context to another raises not only the questions of dependence and independence, of dignity and paternalism, of integrity and honesty in that transaction, but also the question of social status and position of the giving agencies in their world in comparison with the social standing and status of Christians in the receiving situation. That, as Ron Matthews illustrates with a number of case studies, raises further interesting, sharp and difficult questions—not only for Third World countries in the way in which they receive aid and think about development, but also by reflex about First World countries who wish to offer help.

A very valuable collection of papers with the promise of more to come.

Pastoral Ministry

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

by Thomas à Kempis

Newly translated by E. M. Blaiklock

A review by John Cockerton in *Churchman* Vol. 95, No. 1, 1981.

All who love Thomas à Kempis's classic will welcome this new translation. The late Professor Blaiklock, emeritus professor of classics at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, has used his specialist knowledge of Latin to produce this wholly felicitous English version of the original text. It is clear that he has deep sympathy with Thomas's [p. 154](#) spirituality, though, as he indicates in his introduction, there are aspects of the work with which he is less than happy. What appeals to him most, as it surely ought to appeal to all evangelical Christians, is Thomas's devotion to Christ, expressed in all sorts of ways, not least in his passion for holiness. One does not have to be in full accord with everything the book contains in order to be challenged and uplifted by it. And certainly it has been a source of inspiration to countless Christians of all theological and ecclesiastical persuasions since it was written about the year 1418.

The work is divided into four books: "Counsels Useful for Spiritual Living" (there are some gems here on the practical steps which must be taken in order to become more like Christ—the stress is certainly on discipline, but dependence on God is not ignored); "Advice About the Inner Life" (with welcome emphasis upon the central importance of loving Jesus); "On Consolation Within" (the longest of the books, containing a mixture of exhortation and reassurance); "On the Sacrament of the Altar". On this last book Professor Blaiklock gently comments: "Thomas's view of Holy Communion, in the tradition of his church, was a little remote from mine". Long ago, T. M. Lindsay in his *History of the Reformation* commented on this fourth book to the effect that it keeps alive the essential idea of evangelical religion, namely that God's grace is freely given and not merited by what man can do. This is so. Thomas is saved from works' righteousness here and elsewhere by his clear appreciation of his own unworthiness and of God's graciousness towards him.

This new translation, so beautifully done and so inexpensively priced, could well revive the devotional use of Thomas's great work.

Theological and Church Education

GO MAKE LEARNERS: A NEW MODEL FOR DISCIPLESHIP IN THE CHURCH

by Robert Brow
(Harold Shaw, 1981), Pp. 161, \$5.95.

Abstract of a review by John G. Stackhouse Jr., in *TSF Bulletin*, Volume 6, No. 3, January-February 1983.

Robert Brow belongs to that exemplary college of authors who do not write a book until they have something worthwhile to communicate. Brow's last book was published fourteen years ago, and this new book [p. 155](#) is the fruit of decades of pastoral thought and practice in India and Canada.

Go Make Learners presents a "new model for discipleship in the church". The model is that of the "school" and Brow applies this model to the fundamentals of church life: discipleship, baptism, repentance, faith, regeneration, fellowship and mission. Brow hereby challenges the major traditions of Christian doctrine as he redefines these crucial terms in the theological vocabulary. Baptism, for instance, is the action of enrolment, inducting the "learner" (= disciple) into the "school of the Spirit" for instruction in the faith. Faith has several aspects: faith to enroll by baptism in the "school of the Spirit"; faith as a continuous movement toward the light of God; and, finally "justification by faith" as a doctrine to be understood and appreciated by those whose hearts are already directed toward God. The church's mission, as a final example, is to welcome and teach all comers, baptizing all who will enroll.

One of Brow's most telling points is his repudiation of the "evangelical" antinomian that a decision for Christ once made guarantees a place in heaven—no matter what lifestyle succeeds this decision. Brow's model clarifies and orders the many New Testament teachings describing faith as a direction of life rather than simply a once-for-

all decision. Like Bushnell's less orthodox *Christian Nurture* of the last century, *Go Make Learners* is a much needed corrective to the evangelical revivalist preoccupation with "conversions" to the neglect of sanctification.

Robert Brow leaves the reader no opportunity to dismiss lightly him or his work. He is clearly a firm and warm-hearted evangelical: the Bible functions as his sole authority, and justification by faith undergirds his theology. His model is lucid and coherent and it is well informed by knowledge of the Scriptures and of church history.

Brow has found this model to have revolutionized his ministry. By having in his mind a clear picture of the church and thus of himself as its pastor, he has "found great joy and freedom ... when speaking to new Christians, explaining baptism and baptizing, and in the context of many pastoral problems". I commend this book to everyone concerned about the life and function of the church—it deserves this wide a reading.

THE EXTENSION MOVEMENT IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

(Revised Edition) by F. Ross Kinsler.

(Pasadena, William Carey Library, 1981), Pp. xviii, 294 [p. 156](#)

An abstract of a review by Dale F. Walker in *East Asia Journal of Theology* Vol. 1, No. 2, 1983

Twenty years ago the Evangelical Presbyterian Seminary of Guatemala began its influential experiment in Theological Education by Extension (TEE). Ross Kinsler was involved in this programme from its second year, and is now the Assistant Director of the Programme on Theological Education of the WCC. In this book he has put together a number of his papers on TEE, dealing with underlying concepts, concrete applications (especially in Guatemala), and some more recent developments. The book was first published in 1978; this revision includes five new chapters.

A list of the chapter titles, along with interspersed comments by the reviewer will give some idea of the range of the book. (The new chapters in the revised edition are marked by asterisk). The first part of the book deals with the basic concepts of the TEE, model: 1. "Bases for change in theological education": theological, historical, sociological, educational, economic, missiological. 2. "What is extension?": reaching a new clientele. 3. "A working definition of TEE": seen in relation to other types of programmes. 4. "Extension: an alternative model for theological education": TEE facilitates the drive for radical restructuring of education, emphasizing contextualization, conscientization, and liberation. 5. "Open theological education": a comparison of secular 'open education' programmes and the possibilities of TEE 6. "TEE: service or subversion?": TEE's greatest service may be in challenging existing structures of the church and its ministry. 7.* "Primary Health Care and Primary Ministries": a comparison of TEE and community-based medical programmes. 8.* "Mission by the people": a summary statement, also found in *International Review of Mission* (July 1979). The second part of the book surveys the development of TEE in Latin America (ch. 9), in Africa (ch. 10*) and in North America (ch. 11*), followed by a general assessment: "TEE comes of age: current developments and critical questions" (ch. 12*). The third part of the book is more specific: 13. "Materials for workshops on TEE": important guidelines for analysis of needs and the planning of a TEE programme. 14. "The Spanish Intertext project". 15. "The ALISTE project for training extension specialists" in Latin America. 16. "Centres for Studies in Theological Education and Ministry": proposes regional resource centres to further the development of TEE.

Kinsler's book is sub-titled: "A call to the renewal of the ministry". This is meant to be taken seriously. Underlying the practical aspects of the book and the pragmatic motivations for TEE (more results for less [p. 157](#) money) is a developing realization of

the revolutionary implications of TEE. Those involved, in the movement are forced to consider the ministry of the whole body of Christ, the people, the poor, the oppressed; in short, those who are largely by-passed in traditional education and ministry.

Unfortunately, there is very little in the book on TEE in our region. Who can provide this additional chapter? [p. 158](#)

Journal Information

Publications Referred to in This Issue

Bibliotheca Sacra

Published by Dallas Theological Seminary, 3909 Swiss Ave., Dallas, Texas, USA 75204. Rates: \$6.00 per year (4 issues).

Catalyst

Published by the Melanesian Institute for Pastoral and Socio-Economic Service, P.O. Box 571, Goroko, E.H.P. Papua New Guinea. Rates: Papua New Guinea K 5.00, All developing countries K 5.00, Australia K 6.50, elsewhere K 7.50 (4 issues)

Churchman

Published by Church Society (Anglican), 186 Kennington Park Road, London, SE11 4BT, England. Rates: £8.95 p.a. (4 issues).

East Asian Journal of Theology

Published by the Association for Theological Education in S.E. Asia and the N.E. Asia Association of Theological Schools, 4 Mount Sophia, Singapore 0922, Republic of Singapore. Rates: Third World US \$5.00, elsewhere US \$10.00. (2 issues).

The Evangelical Quarterly

Paternoster Press, 3 Mount Radford Crescent, Exeter, EX2 4JW, England or Paternoster Press, P.O. Box 11127, Birmingham, Alabama 35202 USA. Rates: £6.80, \$16.80 (4 issues).

Evangelical Theological Education Today, Agenda for Renewal No. 2

Published by World Evangelical Fellowship, Evangel Publishing House, P.O. Box 28963, Nairobi, Kenya.

Journal of Theology for Southern Africa

C/o Department of Religious Studies, University of Capetown, Rondebosch 7700, Cape, South Africa. Rates: R 8.00, libraries R 12.00 (4 issues).

Latimer

Published by the Latimer Fellowship of New Zealand, P.O. Box 31052, Christchurch 4, New Zealand (4 issues) Rates: NZ \$8.00 p.a. in New Zealand, overseas subscribers in Asia Pacific Postal Union countries add NZ \$2.40 for postage, other countries add \$3.20 for postage.

Theological Review

of the Near East School of Theology, P.O. Box 13-5780, Chouran, Beirut, Lebanon 25 LL/year (\$7.00 per year). [p. 159](#)

Reformed Theological Review

Box 2587W, Elizabeth Street, P.O. Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia. Rates: Australia & South Pacific \$5.40, other countries \$5.70 (3 issues).

Themelios

38 De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GP, England or TSF, 233 Langdon, Madison, Wisconsin 53703 USA. Rates: £3.00, \$9.00 (3 issues).

TSF Bulletin

Published by Theological Students Fellowship, 233 Langdon, Madison, Wisconsin 53703 USA. Rates: \$6.50 (5 issues).

Wheaton '83 Papers

804/92 Deepali, Nehru Place, New Delhi 110019, India.